

KING ARTHUR IN ANTIQUITY



GRAHAM ANDERSON



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Graham Anderson

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FOR JASPER GRIFFIN

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PREFACE

It is not so long ago that an impassioned scholar of ‘Nennius’ urged his fellow-scholars not to believe in King Arthur, or at the very least to stop using him in the titles of their books. I have no particular beliefs of my own about so elusive a figure, but the significance of the title ‘King Arthur in Antiquity’ will scarcely be lost on any reader. I have set out to change our perceptions of this Arthur by discussing texts that appear to be entirely unknown to Classical and Medieval Historians and Literary Scholars alike; and which appear to me to relocate the Arthurian World lock stock and barrel no further forward in time than the early first millennium BC, and in the East Mediterranean. No doubt some medieval British historians would be delighted to be relieved of a figure who has been at times an embarrassment and a burden, and of whose non-existence in the British Dark Ages they are already convinced; I am less than certain that classicists will be happy to find someone else’s literary and historical débris dumped on their doorstep.

Questions about the historicity of King Arthur are commonplace: there is general awareness that at least some of the legendary materials may be older than the traditional Dark Age date for Arthur himself. And the advancement of ‘new’ and allegedly ‘real’ Arthurian candidates is on the increase. An ‘oriental Arthur’ was suspected as early as the Middle Ages themselves, and most recently several non-British candidates have opened up new possibilities; but investigation has been frustrated by the lack of any new literary evidence. The present study investigates texts concerning several much older candidates and their wider context: they provide a new Arthurian complex, some of which is quite securely historical in certain respects, and long before the traditional British candidate of the early Dark Ages. The candidates include an Arktouros as such; and a voiced-dental form of the continental Artus, stated in a text not previously considered to be ‘greatest of knights’. I also offer candidates for Kay and Gawain, and more tentatively for Lancelot and the Lady of the Lake; prototypes for the Graal quest and Excalibur, and the Round Table; a standard adventure of Gawain, and as far as I am aware at least one new adventure for Arthur himself. There is evidence of early historical prestige for the legends, and for their romantic elaboration.

PREFACE

Whether this 'Arthur-complex' be accepted or not is less important than that it should be seriously studied and made known. Either it provides a new 'real Arthur' (among several new possibilities), or it should at least help to tell us why it seems to be so easy to produce 'new' candidates in the first place. Either way it deserves to be seen as a new branch of ancient fictional narrative, echoed in several literary genres, and pointing the way to a new Tristan story a thousand years earlier than Thomas or Béroul. It also reinforces the late medieval impression that there was knowledge of King Arthur in the East as well as the Celtic West.

This project first suggested itself as I found myself studying Old French literature in University College Dublin, when I realised that Béroul was using material I could readily recognise in classical texts. It gathered momentum when I came to approach the fragments of Nicolaus of Damascus in the early 1980s, but has had to wait a long time to come to the present formulation. I am grateful to Joseph Long, my tutor in Old French, and to the seminar in Medieval Studies in UCD, where I first encountered the Celtic dimension to Medieval Studies. I have had profitable conversation since with the late Tom Blagg, and with Ewen Bowie, Christopher Chaffin, Anna Chouhdri, Richard Gameson, Richard Eales, Arthur Keaveney, Angela and Peter Lucas, Richard Stoneman and Antony Ward. My own pupil Graham Mallaghan has contributed well beyond the call of duty in drawing my attention to items of bibliography I should otherwise have overlooked. I have also benefited a great deal from the advice of two anonymous Routledge referees, and from the personal generosity of Jack Zipes, who made available to me three newly collected Sicilian variants of the 'Bear's Son' tale; and from sustained encouragement over more than three decades from the dedicatee, and from my wife.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJPb</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>ALMA</i>	<i>Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages</i>
<i>AND</i>	<i>Arthurian Name Dictionary</i>
<i>CAH</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
<i>CPb</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>EM</i>	<i>Enzyklopädie des Märchens</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
<i>Gantz</i>	<i>Early Greek Myth</i>
<i>HB</i>	‘Nennius’, <i>Historia Brittonum</i>
<i>HRB</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>Latham</i>	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i>
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>Liddell-Scott-Jones</i>
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>PBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
<i>PEG</i>	<i>Poetae Epici Graeci</i>
<i>PMG</i>	<i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i>
<i>PIR</i>	<i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i>
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i>
<i>POxy</i>	<i>Oxyrynchus Papyri</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Realencyklopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>SBE</i>	<i>Sacred Books of the East</i>

THE TRADITIONAL ARTHUR

King Arthur stands out among legendary figures as international, but particularly post-classical and particularly British.¹ In the late 1960s, when confidence was running high that an alliance of history and archaeology was about to reveal a genuine historical Arthur at the right time and place, this Britishness was taken for granted:

For many centuries now, the story of Arthur and his knights has been the chief myth of the island of Britain. It is far more than a medley of fireside tales. Only a theme answering to some deep sense of national character and need could have flourished for so long, or exerted such an influence on literature, art, and, occasionally, even politics.

So wrote the secretary of the Camelot Research Committee in 1968,² and many of the assumptions in this paragraph are still with us. In the same volume the same author reviews the popular associations of Arthur, and the limitations of their value for the historian, allowing himself a little flourish of what he intends as absurdity:

[The name Arthur] even occurs in the sky. Some Cornishmen call the Great Bear 'Arthur's Wain'. We could not safely infer that the *dux bellorum* anticipated the astronauts.³

We could most certainly infer that some Cornishmen *thought* he had, and we have a reasonable obligation to ask why. But the same assumption as quoted in the previous passage is at work here. The author does not ask how widespread the belief in Arthur's celestial wain might have been, or whether it would have been equally accessible anywhere else in the area covered by the Roman Empire; nor does he ask when Cornishmen might have begun to adopt such a belief. This study sets out to challenge the kind of assumptions so clearly set forth in the passages quoted. I set out the evidence for two East Mediterranean Arthur-figures much earlier than the standard British example, one of them with celestial associations. But first we should look more closely at current conventional images of Arthur.

The 'Arthurian problem'

An Arthur has been known in what purports to be historical record since the Nennian corpus in the ninth century AD. And this supposedly 'historical' Arthur who appears in the *Historia Brittonum* attributed to 'Nennius'⁴ has been assigned more or less precise dating across the late fifth and early sixth centuries AD, allegedly taking part in battles at Badon and Camlann and dying in the early sixth century, according to entries in the *Annales Cambriae*.⁵ It is not till the early twelfth century that a fully-fledged Arthur-figure comes into his own in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin pseudo-chronicle, *The History of the Kings of Britain*; and later in the same century Arthur has his great springboard into Arthurian Romance in the French verse narratives of Chrétien de Troyes.⁶ Already in Chrétien his court is associated with an even more opaque and elusive theme, the quest for the Holy Graal; and there is a further subsidiary cycle, that of Tristan, which seems to join the complex very shortly afterwards. All three groups of tales flourish until well after the great compilation of Sir Thomas Malory which took Arthur into the age of printing.

Two kinds of doubt were raised about Arthur in the Middle Ages themselves: one already concerned his historical existence, a second was about where else accounts of him might be found. William of Newburgh in particular criticised Geoffrey of Monmouth for his expansive treatment of a king unknown to the Venerable Bede:⁷

Those the Venerable Bede describes as the bravest kings of the English, nobly ruling over the whole of Britain, Geoffrey makes mere prince-lings and lackeys of these men. So to ensure that we place our confidence in all details in Bede, of whose wisdom and sincerity there can be no doubt, that yarn-spinner (*fabulator*) and all his tales must without hesitation be rejected by all.

In modern times a steady doxography has built up for and against the idea of the 'historical' Arthur. The main impetus in recent decades has tended to come from the archaeological side: as Dark Age sites, particularly in southern Britain, have been more fully excavated, the tendency to tie them to likely Arthurian geography has increased. This approach was associated in the early 1970s with Leslie Alcock's proposed identification of Arthur's capital at Camelot with the heavily fortified site of South Cadbury; and it has increased with greater awareness of the archaeology of Arthur's traditional birthplace of Tintagel, among much else. The underlying climate of opinion led John Morris not only to entitle his own synthesis on Dark Age Britain *The Age of Arthur*,⁸ but to see Arthur as the leading force in the British defence against Saxon invasion.

Morris took the simple and unguarded stance that Arthur's reign and indeed 'Empire' was described by the contemporary ecclesiastical pamphleteer Gildas, who just happened not to mention the leader's name:

These institutions (criticised by Gildas) existed. They are not the institutions of a society that had entirely disintegrated, but of a society whose rulers were at least trying to rebuild the administrative order of the past. Arthur's government had only one possible and practicable aim, to restore and revive the Roman Empire in Britain.⁹

Arthur's name is insinuated into the last sentence as if there could have been no possible doubt when or indeed if he existed. This confidence was swept aside in a minimalist treatment of the early Welsh sources by David Dumville, for whom not one of the 'facts' of Arthur's career as offered by 'Nennius' in the ninth century could be substantiated by the critical standards of textually based historians. On the other hand, the Welsh sources of later date but clearly earlier character were felt not unreasonably to deal with a figure of the world of myth:

We need to understand the sources, motives, and technical terminology of each of our writers. We cannot accept a text, or an item in a text, simply on the ground that it appears to derive from tradition. This all too common excuse is by itself meaningless. What is 'tradition'? Whose tradition? Monastic, legal, craft tradition? And once we begin to ask questions of this sort, we are forced to ask ourselves about the processes of transmission, with all the further questions and critical judgments which that implies.¹⁰

The argument for meticulous source-criticism was well made, and stemmed the tide of speculation and presumption at least for a while. But as Thomas Charles-Edwards argues, in a more compromising stance,¹¹ there are times when a later age may have a less biased perspective than a contemporary eyewitness (particularly one as partisan as the sixth-century Gildas); and there is at least something to be said for noting convergences of sources and types of sources whose individual contributions might be less than persuasive in themselves. And in fact Dumville actually comes close to acknowledging that within his limitations as a synchronising historian 'Nennius' seems to have made the best of a bad job.

Even the most sceptical approach¹² cannot expect to disprove the existence of 'an' Arthur, though it can make us wary of relying on 'no smoke without fire' in Dumville's phrase. But the origin of the legend has still to be accounted for, and some explanation offered of much-maligned or ill-defined 'tradition'. In the 1980s and 1990s archaeology has still further continued excursions into historicising the legend, again by balancing probabilities of actual sites of supposedly 'Arthurian' activity. The latest accounts of this kind I have seen include arguments for an Arthur wounded in his last battle of Camlann and carried out of a military career to Whithorn in Galloway, duly identified with Avallon, and thus to a tomb in Scotland;¹³ or south to an Avallon in Bardsey

island, thence to identification with a soldier-Saint Arthmael in Brittany, with similar result.¹⁴

Those who wish to account for a historical core to the legend have two angles of approach: either one can study the 'right' period of the fifth and sixth centuries AD¹⁵ and find candidates of some other name who for some reason take on the name or title Arthur; or one looks for Arthurs of almost any period from the second to the eighth centuries AD who were wrongly connected to the historical vacuum between Roman withdrawal and Saxon invasions that Arthur himself is meant to have filled. It should be stressed that neither procedure is either absurd or unsound in itself. The trouble always is that with so little to go on, and such generally unspecific source material available, almost any candidate can be plausibly made to 'fit' after a fashion the nebulous historical probabilities available. Guesswork tends to proliferate in hypothesis after hypothesis in relating the Arthurian materials to individual sites: there seems an almost insatiable appetite, especially in semi-popular books about Arthur, for trying to pin the king's supposed court at Camelot down to south-western England or south Wales, or the north as far as lowland Scotland:¹⁶ all of this can further be complicated by the idea that the prestige of the name Arthur, once established, is likely to cause the use of the name itself to proliferate, so that achievements of several different Arthurs of more than one period might plausibly coalesce to form a composite.

There is a certain fixity about the key personnel, though a great deal of spelling variation as both Latin and the medieval vernaculars struggle to transcribe basically unfamiliar names. We expect variants of the name Arthur in British sources, but in French and German romances more often variants of Artus;¹⁷ a colleague and stepbrother Kay offers such variants as Kai, Kei, Caius or Cato; a nephew Gawain might appear as Gavain, Gowan, Walwannis or Walwain (as well as Gwalchmai in Welsh sources); and a Queen Guinevere as anything from Ginover to Winlogée. Among minor characters there is a persistently villainous Maelwas or Meleagant, and the ever-lengthening cast-list extends to such figures as the Lischois who makes a single appearance in Wolfram von Eschenbach, or the Cerses/Serses who figures as the supporter of Arthur's enemy King Claudas in the Vulgate Lancelot.¹⁸

When we come to the Holy Graal texts, there is a good deal more fluidity still: the Graal itself can be a platter, a chalice, or a stone with a beam of light, appearing in a Graal castle where it sustains a maimed king whose Waste Land the Graal knight has to restore by asking the right question.¹⁹ The maimed king and his often complex family are likewise fugitive and elusive in their identity.

The most plausible situations that historicisers tend to present are clusters of material where different strands of Arthurian or quasi-Arthurian material can be treated together. It is relatively easy to localise the Tristan legend in the literary sources to a quite narrow area of Cornwall, where a Drustanus son of Cunomorus is epigraphically attested in an early Dark Age context;²⁰ and

then to look at the Arthurian connexions with Tintagel on the opposite coast, and the location of Camelot at South Cadbury.²¹ But such clusters of evidence do not preclude alternatives, especially if their dates are early.

But much of such scholarship is seriously frustrated by the fact that the sub-Roman communications of Britain would still have enabled relatively rapid movement, so that the phenomenon of a moving field headquarters across a number of areas could still have left a local tradition in a number of different places, all of them with an incentive to claim a prestigious figure as theirs.²² The prevalence of similar place-names in different but linguistically united areas produces just such an effect: there is a specifically named Avallon in Brittany,²³ to rival the Glastonbury and Whithorn sites; and more than one Camlann in mid-Wales to rival the strongly supported Camelford in Cornwall.²⁴

There are also the risks of some fallacious or circular methods. For example, Castleden claims that 'there was an Arthur-shaped gap between 500 and 540';²⁵ one might well so claim, but claimants will always run the risk of fashioning their Arthur to suit the gap itself. Those who attempt to narrate a continuous history run the risk of converting speculation or even wishful thinking into fact: even Morris was not exempt from this,²⁶ and some of the more archaeological approaches have in the past been no less unguarded.

A recurrent problem is the sheer charismatic appeal of finding 'the real Arthur': it is somehow assumed that there *must* be one, and only one, in defiance of normal and well-attested tendencies in the behaviour of legendary material. From this point of view, indeed, the idea of *an* Arthur conflating several different but perhaps similarly named figures is attractive: one thinks of the Egyptian legend of Herodotus' conflation of several pharaohs into a composite Sesonchosis.²⁷

Last and most important of these assumptions is that the literature is all late and the subject himself completely fixed in time and place. This runs counter to the tendency of migratory legend:²⁸ even if it has to start *somewhere*, the likelihood of our being able to penetrate it early enough may be slimmer than we suppose. We can only be sure of our historical grounds if there are no *other* Arthur-figures elsewhere that are clearly attested as earlier.

The 'Arthur of history': annals and archaeology

We can look briefly, then, at how much or how little we have to anchor King Arthur in the fifth and sixth centuries AD. The one contemporary witness who could have told us does not do so: Gildas writes a lamenting and strongly sermonising account of his age in the *De Excidio Britanniae* ('On the Ruin of Britain'), and deplores the present state of the British nation after Roman withdrawal in the face of Saxon threat.²⁹ Names, where they are mentioned, in particular that of Vortigern, generally stand up to historical scrutiny, but

the only major figure where we should expect an Arthur to be is a figure bearing the thoroughly Roman name Ambrosius Aurelianus.³⁰ To be sure a major battle only much later associated with Arthur's name is mentioned, the battle of Badon;³¹ a battle-list given by 'Nennius' in the ninth century links it with 'our' Arthur. We can see the impasse this creates: to any who wish King Arthur to be a legendary figment, it can be claimed that there is no contemporary evidence; those who wish to find a 'real' Arthur in the appropriate period have to find reasons why he should not have been mentioned. One would be that Arthur had killed Gildas' brother,³² another that Gildas' sermonising style rarely permits the naming of names. While either reason will account for the silence, neither, nor their combination, can actually *prove* that there was an Arthur there to mention. By the time the King appears in 'Nennius', so the negative argument runs, he will be a figure of legend embroidered into a period too distant and sparsely documented to be able to reject him.³³

That there is room of a kind for such a figure is not itself in doubt: what is implied in the sparse contemporary history of Gildas and any later plausible historical tradition, and the rapidly increasing archaeological record, is that a leader of a sub-Roman British warrior band would have held off the Saxon invasions for a considerable time.³⁴ It has been the signal service of Higham's new *King Arthur: Myth-Making and History* to query even this, as a construct which may itself have been shaped by the agenda of later historians from 'Nennius' onwards, because of its supposed relevance to their own view of the past.³⁵

Such iron-age hillforts as South Cadbury or the former Roman base at Caerleon in south Wales could indeed have served as fortified bases from which to harass invaders;³⁶ the former Roman road system would still have sustained rapid movement so that a leader could move more rapidly over much of Britain than would have been possible in Norman times, for example. But such a leader need not have been 'Arthur', at least by name. It has been pointed out that in particular the insular leader Riothamus was active in the late fifth century³⁷ (in conventional chronology), but most probably a generation before the 'Age of Arthur', both in England and in Armorica. Anyone who wishes to assimilate him to 'Arthur' may of course do so, and such an assimilation would certainly help to account for later tradition that Arthur won victories on the Continent as well as in Britain. But it will not, again, give us 'our' Arthur without a measure of special pleading: the name itself is just not where we want it to be, any more than it is to be explicitly found in Gildas himself.

If we wish to take a strictly chronological stance, then, there are no absolutely unequivocal contemporary candidates for Arthur at the right time; that is no reason why legendary materials will not have been drafted in to fill the gap; nor does it preclude the possibility that some suspicion of some truth might attach to them. But something has to be made to account for the concentration of legendary materials round a specifically named figure.³⁸ This may *in extremis* be due to sheer invention; or the more strongly favoured

possibility that there must be *some* reason for the accumulation of so much material round a single central figure.

'Nennius' and Geoffrey of Monmouth are no easier to disentangle: the former claims a list of twelve battles in which Arthur fought, and might conceivably have annexed an early Welsh battle-poem to supply his information;³⁹ and because of uncertainty in the transmission of the 'Nennian' corpus itself it is difficult to disentangle what and how much of this information is earlier than 'Nennius', attributable to the author himself, or the subject of later interpolation. Here Arthur is a *dux bellorum*, and a Christian, performing a battle-miracle.⁴⁰ Even if, however, Nennius is difficult to use, it does not mean once more that there is not an element of plausibility in the battle-list itself: a whole sequence of scholars have offered a more or less plausible sequence of sites;⁴¹ but that, once more, is not enough to attest the existence of the king to whom they can have become attached. The battles have been almost tediously rearranged to suit just about any 'local' interpretation of supposed military campaigns. If a King Arthur were *already* established, for example, it would be perfectly natural to attach his name to impressively fortified sites or strategic river-crossings where crucial actions might be fought.

The Arthur of un-history: myth, legend, folktale, romance

For the Dark Age historian the legendary Arthur is a figure of only marginal interest; but for the formation of the legend itself every avenue has still to be explored. We can actually test the accumulation of legend around another late Romano-British figure to show the metamorphosis that has taken place in a similar situation. The Roman commander Magnus Maximus took his troops over to the Continent in the late fourth century to contest the sovereignty of Rome itself.⁴² That he died before succeeding does not stop the development of a British legend: in the *Mabinogi* preserved in late medieval Welsh manuscript tradition we have a tale of Maxim Wledic side by side with a group of traditional Arthurian tales. It is not too difficult to separate the legendary accretion from the verifiable historical materials in this one instance – no guarantee in itself that the case of Arthur will be as straightforward. The essential difference is that we actually *have* the historical sources to prove the existence of Maximus, and in the right context: we have no such guarantee for Arthur.

Not that there is any lack of native British material to which Arthur has become attached. His dog leaves a footprint in stone in Arthur's hunt for a great boar; his men go off to Ireland in three ships to recover the cauldron of Annwfn, and only seven return; or he and his associates fail to steal a pig from Tristan.⁴³ And there has been no lack of surviving local British oral folklore about Arthur: Ruth Tongue collected Arthurian traditions from Sewingshields in Somerset, of a shepherd who discovers the sleeping Arthurian court, but out

of timidity does not succeed in waking them; or the tale of Arthur and Guinevere quarrelling, so that a huge stone flung by the king is warded off by the queen with her comb.⁴⁴ And some at least of this has escaped the net: even in the sub-literature of the chapbooks Jack the Giant Killer is enlisted by King Arthur's son to rescue a girl captured by the Giant; he brings the Giant's two heads back to the king's court. At first sight we might be tempted to conclude that any piece of folklore can be randomly overlapped with any other, so that it does not matter whether the king is Arthur or Old King Cole; but we shall have cause to return to this example.⁴⁵

The mythico-legendary materials relating to Arthur have necessarily a longer time-scale than the historical context itself. A still earlier Arthur than that of historical legend has been sought in Britain from time to time, as recently by John Darrah (1981 and 1994), and in W.A. Cummins' *King Arthur's Place in Prehistory* (1992), the latter of which will serve as a convenient example of the difficulties involved. Cummins' method was to take the one major allusion to what we *know* to be prehistory, the statement in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Life of Merlin* that the prophet himself was responsible for transporting the stones to Stonehenge from Ireland.⁴⁶ Up to a point this operation can be archaeologically confirmed, at least insofar as stones were indeed imported from elsewhere, and this must have been done by *someone*. Cummins then carries matters a stage further and takes that someone to be the Arthurian Merlin-figure, and applies his chronological link with Arthur. That makes the latter a prehistoric figure, presiding over a circular temple on Salisbury plain; the description in Geoffrey linking it to the 'Cloister of Ambrius'⁴⁷ is then held to produce a confusion with Ambrosius Aurelianus, the (real) contemporary of the (false) Dark Age Arthur.

Cummins' arguments are of considerable significance, in that they show the results of boldly radical detachment of Arthur from his traditional context. They certainly fit him comfortably into a Bronze Age cultural milieu (where of course there is no formal history to get in the way), and they account very well for his being a source of wonder and miracle: anyone associated with the phenomenal structure at Stonehenge might expect to be a figure of legend in an oral heroic tradition.

There are, however, also considerable limitations, at least in the extent of detail which is omitted from such a thesis. It gives us a date for a Merlin-figure, or rather it suggests a perfectly reasonable legendary association: 'Stonehenge is so wonderful that it would have taken a Merlin to transport the stones.' But this does not guarantee that 'our' Merlin did transport the stones; nor that even if he did he was really a contemporary of an arch-legendary Arthur. The latter might once more have been associated with Merlin on just the same sort of basis: 'so wonderful a king must have been backed by an equally wonderful magician.' There are other bonuses, however: it gives Arthur a conspicuous place for assembly, and if not a Round Table, certainly a round circle for any court.⁴⁸ But no other aspect of the legend or political

context can be provided. The preservation of a Bronze Age tomb of Gawain or Guinevere would have worked wonders for such a theory. But by moving Arthur out of a relatively well-documented and action-packed period in the Dark Ages, we give him plenty of space, few co-ordinates and only one associate. This smacks of taking a place and associating it with a prestigious person – precisely the approach that has replicated itself without conclusive result on the part of Dark Age archaeologists: there is no ground for preferring *this* association, medieval as it is, over, for example, the association of Camelot and Cadbury offered by the Tudor antiquarian John Leland. Moreover, the odd structure of Stonehenge is not really so unique in Arthurian repertoire: Graal scholars have long noted the Persian candidate for the Graal temple, Taq-al-Taquis;⁴⁹ this is much later than Stonehenge, and indeed a genuinely medieval building, but still safely predates even Geoffrey of Monmouth: it is a reminder, one of many, that Western Arthurian associations can have uncomfortable Eastern counterparts that may serve to challenge the uniqueness of the British Arthur.

There is also a problem in the Cummins theory with the names themselves: what is the actual *language* of the name Arthur? If it is classical or Celtic, what would it be doing attached to a monument constructed or reconstructed in the second millennium BC? Or how could it have emerged at all before the Roman invasion or the previous Celtic colonisation? That would not preclude an earlier figure, but he could not in the first instance have been called Arthur.

One further line of enquiry has, however, shown more promise in an early British environment. Following in a tradition that goes back at least to Sir John Rhys in the late nineteenth century, Darrah⁵⁰ went on to examine a number of the recurrent features in the Arthurian romances that suggest a pre-Christian belief-system: adventures set beside springs or fountains with their own deities, or at any rate something resembling ladies-in-waiting beside specific trees;⁵¹ the much-studied rain-making ceremony in Chrétien's *Yvain*;⁵² or the practice of individual knights of testing all comers and mounting the severed heads of those defeated,⁵³ and a number of other motifs of the kind. All these build up a mosaic of cults and cult-sacrifice, not without Frazerian overtones: indeed Darrah starts his latter investigation specifically from the grove of Diana at Nemi, none other. And the resulting selection of details points to a core of material which may well be early British in some sense, but which is not necessarily exclusive to Britain, as again the comparison with Nemi only serves to underline. We shall meet similar examples elsewhere before long. But once more the problem as it stands is that this mythological world, almost stridently repeated in the romances in a multitude of variations, is not linked more specifically to Arthur and his Court before Chrétien. We still need name and narrative to be tied together earlier than the Middle Ages. In the same year as Darrah, Oliver Padel stressed the folklore attached to the 'Arthurian' locations, in the boar-hunt or the 'Nennian' magic grave; these would point to a perhaps gigantic Arthur of myth and wild war-band

to correspond to the semi-magical Irish Finn, and this time historicised into the legend which has given historians so much trouble.⁵⁴ The problem is to identify such a figure in a British context in any independent mythological stratum.

Myth and legend, nebulous as they are, can be seen as less nebulous than the idea of Arthurian romance itself. It might be said that there are some obvious 'trademarks' to the explosion of works that begin with Chrétien's *Erec*: the recurrence of primary features such as swords in stones (emphatically in the plural, since they occur as tests for Arthur's warriors as well as himself), swords thrown into lakes, supported more frequently in archaeology than in narrative sources, a Round Table community, the named sword Excalibur, the Holy Graal quest, and a whole culture of romantic adventure. Helping damsels in distress is indeed a large part of this, either in the form of rescue from rape, kidnap or incarceration, often at the hands of barbaric captors in well-nigh Otherworldly realms; as indeed are Otherworldly expeditions more generally, where an Otherworldly woman exerts a thrall over an adventurer of this world. There are shape-shifters and wonder-workers and a general climate of magic, as well as a certain amount of zoomorphic material. This is a mythology where the distinction between human and animal is not always absolute. There are high-profile adulteries, surrounding the Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere triangle with a secondary parallel in Marc, Tristan and Isolde. Indeed, parallel recycling is a feature of this literature: the same or fairly similar adventures may be told of Arthur and of one or another of his men, on an almost interchangeable basis.

For many decades past the beginnings of these motifs have been sought in analogous situations in Celtic folk-tradition, itself dating back at least to texts copied in the later Middle Ages but reasonably suspected to be of much older date. We can note in particular that the Arthur of the tales attached to the *Mabinogi* and the Welsh *Triads* is a very different figure from the king who presides over knights at Camelot. He is more likely to be stealing a pig from Tristan, or trying to, and his retinue can have extraordinary and on the whole un-knightly attributes, like those of Kay in *Culhwch and Olwen*. Much of this repertoire of romance is difficult to relate precisely to the *dux bellorum* of 'Nennius', or indeed even to the Arthur of Geoffrey's pseudo-chronicle: some can be explained at least tentatively in relation to a more international folklore than that of the Celts. Unfortunately most of the material was treated before an international indexing system had been put in place or had been widely practised; and there is always the accusation that we have no idea when international folktales spread, or even if some of them existed in the Middle Ages at all.⁵⁵ At the same time some of these are routinely assigned to bizarre inventions of specific authors, as when a magic chessboard disappears to the other world in the Dutch Romance *Walewein*, or in the case of a number of turning castles and similar oddities.⁵⁶ In particular it has seemed difficult to trace an outline like that of the following incident:

King Arthur, travelling incognito, wins a parrot in a golden cage; it accompanies him through a series of adventures, speaking, singing love songs, and dispensing advice. He now goes to rescue a lady with blonde hair; she is threatened by a knight of the fish, a bizarre creature who comes from water but doubles as a knight on horseback, so strong that he flattens trees on land – before the King himself escapes death by fighting his way to a castle guarded by a revolving wheel at the entrance.⁵⁷

This particular example is generally dismissed as a very late and bizarrely inventive development; we may however have to look again, and ask ourselves what a simpler version of such a story might have looked like.

Time and again our view of the relationship of Arthur to history, legend, romance and myth and any notion of ‘development’ comes down to chronology. ‘Nennius’ association of Arthur with the victor of Gildas’ Battle of Badon is the weakest link by far in the chain that leads to a fifth- or sixth-century Arthur. We do not know why and when this link came about: either because someone genuinely named or styled Arthur really did win such a battle, whenever and wherever it might have been fought, or because such a victory could only be attributed to someone as reputable as an already established Arthur-figure of a more legendary or even mythological kind – to suit the agenda of a much later age.⁵⁸ We then have to ask – yet again – whether we can find any explanation for why such a name should have been so prestigious, apparently from the outset.

A new direction?

Where, then, could any King Arthur have come from? If we want to trace legendary history, or indeed the history of legend, we might do well at least to look at the roots the British attributed to themselves. As early as Ammianus Marcellinus we have Trojan connexions postulated for Gaul;⁵⁹ and by ‘Nennius’ himself we find the British nation associated with one Brutus, the descendant of Aeneas of Troy.⁶⁰ It is easy to laugh this sort of claim out of court at the very outset, and suggest that a writer like ‘Nennius’ will be reliable only for the assumptions and preoccupations of his own time, but that the further back he goes, the more he will depend on any nonsense and unscholarly etymologies he cannot check. If a Trojan ancestry was traditionally good enough for the patriarchal Aeneas in the eyes of the ancient Romans, so the inference is drawn, then it is good enough for the infinitely less civilised and critically aware Britons. One notes in passing, however, such bizarre connexions as Scotti and Scythai from the Middle Ages themselves.⁶¹ We note too that the patron saint of England is a dragon-slaying saint from western Asia; and that the original name for London, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth,⁶² was after one Llydd, whose folktale suitably appears beside those of Macsen and Arthur in

the *Mabinogion*;⁶³ if we look in the same geographical direction once more we find a Lydus as an eponymous king of Lydia,⁶⁴ with overlapping credentials.

We can put no trust in medieval British claims of this kind at their face value. But we have a reasonable obligation to distinguish where we can between fantasy and folk-memory, by at least looking at any possible corroborative materials in the quarters to which medieval writers attributed their traditions. We must accordingly look at a view of Arthur that is prepared to take him to origins far from these islands – or rather to wherever traces of his name and connexions can be found. Some indication as to where we might start looking is suggested in the following chapter.

THE 'SARMATIAN CONNEXION' THEORY

Just as the vogue for Arthurian romance was reaching its height in the High Middle Ages, a voice was raised about where else such material was to be found:¹

Whither has not flying fame spread and familiarised the name of Arthur the Briton, even as far as the empire of Christendom extends? Who, I say, does not speak of Arthur the Briton, since he is almost better known to the peoples of Asia than to the Britanni (i.e. the Welsh and the Cornish), as our palmers returning from the East inform us? The Eastern peoples speak of him, as do the Western, though separated by the width of the whole earth. . . . Rome, queen of cities, sings his deeds, nor are Arthur's wars unknown to her former rival Carthage. Antioch, Armenia, Palestine celebrate his acts.

This much-cited testimony from the late twelfth century once attributed to Alanus de Insulis (Alan of Lille) is particularly important, emphasising as it does that awareness of a King Arthur was by no means confined to the far west of western Europe; but it tells us nothing about how such Arthurian material could have arrived where Ps.-Alanus claims it was found. However well Antioch, Armenia and Palestine might unexpectedly have heard of King Arthur, it seems distinctly improbable that Carthage should figure in so late a list, except to provide a facile contrast to Rome itself.

By contrast to the problem of 'the historical Arthur', this second problem, of where such traditions are to be found for the king's exploits, has received very little attention, at least in orthodox scholarship. The quest for the Holy Graal has been assigned some kind of Eastern origins from time to time,² and seemed to fit well the mythological orthodoxies of the early twentieth century; the impact of Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*³ may now have long abated, or may have been consigned to the sub-culture of 'alternative' scholarship. But for the most part, later twentieth-century scholarship on Arthurian texts has accorded a great deal of prominence to Celtic roots, and to the picture of a primitive oral storytelling tradition eventually overlaid by

a more cultivated continental manner. In particular R.S. Loomis was at pains to account for the oriental Arthur so curious a phenomenon to Ps.-Alan of Lille:⁴

If one realizes how much of Asia Minor and Syria was at this time colonized by peoples of French blood or speech, one will not reject this affirmation as sheer balderdash. The writer was patently amazed by the phenomenon . . . we may safely assign the major part in the spread of the Matter of Britain as far as the Latin states of the East to the activities of the Breton *conteurs*. Direct testimony is lacking; but when in instance after instance the signs point to oral rather than literary circulation, it is a logical inference that these same story-tellers accompanied or followed the Frankish hosts who conquered the lands of the eastern Mediterranean.

Loomis' last inference is reasonable, but it does not prove his case. Visitors to the eastern Mediterranean would only be entitled to be amazed if stories of King Arthur were there *already*, before any imported Breton *conteurs* had a chance to put them there.

A 'Scythian' solution

In recent decades, however, the idea of an oriental Arthurian tradition has been afforded serious academic consideration. Since the mid-1970s arguments have been put forward to derive features of the Arthurian story from 'Scythia'.⁵ Two scholars who studied the folktales available from the Caucasus were able to find analogues not only to the Graal story itself, but to a 'sword-in-the-lake' motif as well. This led in time to a full-length treatment by Littleton-Malcor under the title *From Scythia to Camelot*,⁶ in which not only an unexpectedly early Arthur but also a new route to the diffusion of Arthurian tradition has been proposed.

In brief the thesis of Littleton-Malcor is as follows.⁷ The folktales preserved in present-day Ossetia were brought to Britain by Roman army units containing near-Eastern barbarians; as the leader of the first such attested units in Britain in the late second century AD was himself called L. Artorius Castus,⁸ the name 'Arthur' was applied to the heroic legends of the Alans in particular. One of the two key pieces of evidence in the so-called 'Sarmatian connexion' theory of an Eastern King Arthur figure relates to a group of modern folktales published in 1930 by G. Dumézil.⁹ Their contents offer the oral traditions, recorded only from the late nineteenth century, of an Iranian-speaking Ossetian people in relatively inaccessible regions of the Caucasus. The Ossetians called their heroic legendary ancestors the Narts, and they come across as nomadic warriors with a small heroic élite and a distinctive cultural profile. Dumézil took up the comparison, already half a century old, that the lifestyle of the Narts reflected that of the Scyths and Sarmatians in Herodotus and the Alans

in Ammianus Marcellinus, particularly in the long nomadic expeditions on horseback and the cultural primacy of the horse.¹⁰ Littleton-Malcor emphasised the resemblance of elements in this group of tales to some of the more significant Arthurian adventures, and the investigation can be taken further: the Nart cycles include a great deal of convergence with Greek heroic mythology, some of which after all extends into contiguous regions; and there are important points where the Nart legends will actually converge with both of the other two. Such convergences will offer a valuable support for the notion that *some* Arthurian material at least was widespread in a west Asian oral tradition.

Other evidence of Alan presence is found in the barbarian movements within Gaul in the fifth century AD. Once again there is a cultural parallel which Littleton-Malcor emphasise: that the Alani are armoured horsemen and therefore much more convincing transmitters of any notion of chivalry than the chariot-driving Celts.¹¹ There is also the argument that the achievements of the barbarian Rithamus in particular, himself advanced independently as a candidate for King Arthur, were subsumed into the reputation of Arthur.¹² The sword in the stone is attributed by Littleton-Malcor to the Alanic custom of setting the sword in the earth as a symbol of sovereignty;¹³ the cauldron of the Narts, the *Nartamongae*, is identified with the pagan element in the Holy Graal;¹⁴ and the most celebrated scene of the throwing away of Arthur's sword is equated with a Nart tale where the Narts dispose of the sword of their hero Batraz, as follows:¹⁵

After slaughtering a vast array of Narts in their complicity for his father's death, Batraz takes pity on the handful of survivors. He tells them he has satisfied his need for vengeance and that he himself is ready for death, adding 'I cannot die until my sword has been thrown into the sea'. But only Batraz can wield it with ease, so the Narts take the sword instead, and report back that they have followed his instructions. He asks what happened and they are at a loss. He knows this is a lie, as only he knows what will happen. The Narts accordingly try a second time, and having dragged the weapon to the water, they are able to see that the sea becomes turbulent, boils and becomes blood-red. After this is reported, Batraz is able to die.

This has been rightly compared to the celebrated episode in Malory where Sir Bedivere is twice asked by the dying King Arthur to throw his sword into a lake. Because of the beauty of the sword he is unwilling, and the same deception takes place, not once but twice. Only on the third attempt is it thrown into the lake, to be caught by a hand which waves it round three times before it disappears.¹⁶ Both Eastern and Western versions of this latter tale contain the distinctive 'false claim' that the sword has been disposed of when it has not, and the liars are unable to tell what happens to it.¹⁷

The next best, but on balance less distinctive, parallel is that between the cauldron of the Narts, the *Nartamongae*, and the Holy Graal: three of the Narts lay claim to the cauldron, Uryssmaeg, Soslan and Sosryquo; each has something against him; only Batraz has no reservation, so that he can claim it unchallenged. In Graal parlance, he would be 'the Graal Knight', whose rivals have each failed some test or other.¹⁸ There are a number of variants: in one tale¹⁹ each of the Narts has a little cask in front of him: if his boast is true it overflows three times. In story 16 it is a magic cup which rises of its own accord and goes to the lips of the bravest man. Three other cauldron tests are offered in nos. 41f.: the *Nartamongae* will only go to the warrior without fault, and only Batraz qualifies, while Uryssmaeg, Soslan and Sosryquo fail; only Batraz can cause ice in the cauldron to boil merely by reciting his exploits; or can win the ladle of the cauldron by emptying the vessel of noxious animals. Altogether this has a much more heroic quality than is usual in the Christianised accounts of the Graal. But it accords very well with the competitive spirit of the Graal Quest, and with the concept in Celtic tradition of the cauldron of Annwn.²⁰ Again, Littleton-Malcor are able to advance the Nart female figure of Satana, wife of Uryssmaeg, as corresponding to the Lady of the Lake, the primary female protector who is able to provide a new sword for Batraz, just as the Lady of the Lake provides a replacement for Arthur's original weapon.

Some problems with Scythia

The service of Littleton-Malcor has been very considerable, in opposing almost head-on the assumption that Arthurian material must originate in the West. They draw attention to the consequences of wide barbarian dispersal over Europe in the fifth century, just before the time when any historical Arthur is supposed to have flourished. But there are a number of problems with their thesis in anything like its current form. In the first place they themselves offer only the one absolutely convincing parallel, that relating to the throwing away of the sword, that seems not to be readily available in the West elsewhere. And there is also little equivalence of names: or rather there is a great deal of demonstration of the name Alan in western Europe – an important enough contribution in itself – but very little that is new on the name Arthur, or many of the other associates of the Round Table.²¹ There seems to be also an almost total unawareness of any literary evidence, classical or medieval, of materials that might prove or strengthen an oriental barbarian connection with Arthurian material, and not always a full treatment even of the Nart materials the authors actually do cite; nor is there much treatment of the issue that as there were Alans in the West in the early centuries of the Christian era, so too were there Celts in the East.²² Moreover the determination to find what the authors call a 'North-East Iranian connection' at all costs tends to distract attention from what might be found *elsewhere* in the Near East, especially in respect of motifs clearly attributable to well-distributed international tales.

But after initial reluctance, the Littleton-Malcor position has gained at least some ground at scholarly level, even if the popular press has been known to resent the idea of an archetypally 'British' Arthur from South Russia: a recent televisual treatment by Howard Reid²³ has added the voice of a further anthropologist struck by the consistency of much of the Arthurian material with what might be called a Scytho-Sarmatian material culture, and Reid likewise has been prepared to look more closely at the treatment of the Scythians available already in detailed if mannered literary form as far back as Herodotus.

One perpetual drawback of the Littleton-Malcor approach is the minimising of material accessible from the rest of the classical world, and its evaluation. Irrefutably early material such as Theseus' 'sword-from-stone' exploit tends to receive short shrift.²⁴ Littleton and Malcor had not themselves come across a Nart saga using the motif as such, but quote a personal communication of John Colarusso to the effect that it occurs in Circassian Nart sagas where one of three brothers successfully pulls a sword from the anvil of the smith-god Tlepsh (Kurdalaegon) known to the Circassian Narts.²⁵ Littleton-Malcor note the occurrence of this motif in French romances that might have been influenced by Alanic sources in Gaul, rather than the Sarmatians settled in Britain: early British sources and Geoffrey of Monmouth have none of this.

They next want to derive the serpent on Arthurian banners from Sarmatian sources. There is something in this, including the possibility of deriving the Sauromatae from Greek *sauros*, a lizard;²⁶ but the Parthians had such banners as well in the second century AD, as we know from Lucian;²⁷ and coiled serpents are commonplaces of Celtic illumination as well; actual dragon-slaying motifs themselves will be discussed in the context of the dragon-slayer story.

The Holy Graal themes are a generally more promising matter for the Iranian material from which Littleton-Malcor derive their Ossetian sources, as the merest glance at the very different versions of the Graal in Wolfram and other German romancers tends to show. Wolfram himself claimed that his source Kyot drew on a book in a barbarian tongue, most likely Arabic, and an eastern inflexion to the story seems natural enough.²⁸ But once more the arguments are narrowly and selectively pursued, so that the channels lead back a little too inexorably to or through the Caucasus: in discussing analogues of the Graal the authors are even dismissive of the Celtic cauldron of Annwfn which does not serve the meat of a coward, while being very favourable to the *Nartamongae*, the cauldron of the Narts, which has to be awarded to the greatest hero of three.²⁹ They rightly cite a good Scythian parallel of a golden cup fallen from the sky which marks out the youngest of three heroes, Colaxais, as the next ruler,³⁰ and in fact traditions connect the cauldron or cup one way or another with traditions of sovereignty: the person who has possession of it or to whom it is awarded will be king. Some channels of transmission for the Graal materials are advanced, and with some plausibility: Robert de Boron's development of the Graal material does have Alan le Gros as a keeper of the Graal, third after Joseph of Arimathea himself.³¹

Further comparisons

On the other hand there is a very unusual parallel which students of the Narts seem to have missed: this is the story that Arthur is found on the wheel of fortune, which causes his fortunes to rise, but under which they are eventually to be crushed. Despite the very Christian-allegorical feel of the wheel of fortune tale,³² the survival of a much more primitive version among the Narts seems significant: this is the wheel of Barsag, which only one of the leading Narts can face without wincing in tale 41. In tale 29 its context is very close to that of fortune with her wheel: Sosryquo is hunting a white hind which changes into 'the beautiful Agunda' with golden wings; Sosryquo takes her for a devil and threatens to kill her. In indignation she promises to send the wheel of Barsag against him, and first it cuts off the ends of his fingers, then cuts off his legs. An extended variant portrays the wheel as injuring him so that he is able to instruct his horse to secure his tomb burial with its hooves, as it does:

How Sosryquo was killed by the wheel of Barsag:³³ Sosryquo and his men were hunting in a thick forest. Sosryquo got lost chasing a white stag of incomparable beauty. When he reached it, the stag changed into a marvellous woman with golden wings, who said: 'I am the beautiful Agunda! . . .'

Sosryquo jeered at her: 'Agunda in a thick forest? You are nothing but a shameless devil! It is impossible to let you live.' She repeated it, and invoked God. Sosryquo refused to believe her. Finally, threatening him, she spread her golden wings and disappeared. In vain then he called her back. 'I will not come back', she said, and I will send against your companions the Wheel of Barsag! Now you will see whether I am Agunda or not!

As Sosryquo, his rifle on his shoulder, was returning to his companions, he encountered before his tent the Wheel of Barsag coming out of it; 'What have you been doing in my tent, you ass?', he said. The wheel took flight and he pursued. (The wheel, finally caught, bargains to harm his enemies, and he makes a further rendez-vous with it.) 'When he arrived, the wheel, bearing down on him unexpectedly, cut his legs and he stayed there mutilated. But a wolf passed; 'Refresh yourself now from my flesh', said Sosryquo. 'I won't eat Sosryquo's flesh', said the wolf. 'Good, when you attack the flocks you will have my bravery.' (Similar routine for several birds.)

We can note the encounters with wild beasts in this episode, after the wheel has done its work. In the Arthurian wheel of fortune story the beasts precede the encounter, and Arthur is fleeing from them. In the Arthurian tale *Fortune* is deceptively kind to Arthur initially, whereas the Nart saga has the arrogant hero provoking the hostility of both the divine lady and the wheel itself.

Usually it is Sosryquo and his part-doublet Soslan who are the victims of the wheel of Barsag, but in an unusual variant (tale 19e) it also brings about the death of Batraz himself; so that as in the Arthurian cycle the same hero can have the warning of the death by the wheel and the business of throwing away the sword, just as Arthur himself does.

We should compare this version with the tale told of Arthur in the Alliterative Morte text:³⁴ the king dreams that he is passing through a wood full of wild beasts ready to devour his knights, when he meets a richly dressed lady whirling a wheel on which sit kings who have been crushed by this lady fortune, as he himself will be, since the wild beasts are the king's enemies who will shortly bring him down. Coupled with the sword-losing at the death of Batraz, this offers a powerful combination; while the Nart version of the wheel is not allegorical, it does agree with the Middle English version in offering an alternative and unrelated form of death for the leading hero.

Helmut Nickel has added a further cogent parallel between two relatively rare motifs in the two traditions: in an adventure where the Nart heroes Soslan and Sosryquo collect beards of vanquished enemies to adorn a fur-trimmed cloak, with space reserved for Soslan's own – as distinctive a parallel as possible to the Arthurian theme of King Ryon's beard.³⁵

Still more materials can now be added from Colarusso's own invaluable anthology of Nart Sagas newly made available. The *Nartamongae* already discussed was not linked to a 'Waste Land' context, unlike the Holy Graal. But the Narts certainly did have at least some form of the latter tale, in which Badanoquo restores to the company of the Narts the aged and useless father he was expected to kill, having fed the old man during a famine with a millet-cake; the aged father is then able to put an end to the famine by revealing secrets of agriculture.³⁶ There is also a hint in Nart Saga of an exotic Graal castle, in Saga 84:

They say that inside that castle stands a golden table, and on that table rests a golden dish. It was the sort of table that if you left something on it and then went out, when you returned the object would have disappeared. At the back of this castle is a door on which is written: 'Here is where goodness is, but it is not possible to enter here.'³⁷

There was also a rather different Nart form of the 'beheading game' that underlies a major adventure of Gawain: the two combatants are intent on beheading one another, but the villain spares the hero till a return match the next day, whereupon the hero unscrupulously beheads him.³⁸ It might be fairly argued that this puts 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' the wrong way round; but at least it points to a culture where beheading games are part of the heroic ethos.

Most significant of all of these analogues for Arthurian scholarship is the fact unmentioned by Littleton-Malcor and only in passing by Colarusso, that

the Narts themselves have a custom to which a large round table is central (Saga 43):³⁹

The Narts gathered together in a certain place every year and held games there, horse racing, stone flinging, archery, shooting arrows into a hanging egg, horseback riding, snatching things off the ground while riding a horse, . . . [and] dancing on the edge of a large round table while trying not to spill any *bakhsima*-drink from a bowl that stood in the centre.

This table recurs in Saga 51 when the prodigious infant Sosryquo is admitted to the Narts after his great feat with the anvil of Tlepshw (Saga 50), and is brought to the edge of an (apparently large) three-legged table on which the Narts dance.⁴⁰

Widening horizons

All in all there is a great deal of promise, if some missed opportunities and unguarded over-enthusiasm, in the Littleton-Malcor view. It reinforces the suspicion that behind the romantic appeal of the Arthurian Court from Geoffrey of Monmouth onwards there is room for the folklore of a heroic warrior culture: and there is a sense in which the often semi-comic trickster-tales of the Narts share a world with the kind of exploits implied in the Branches of the Mabinogi or the Welsh Triads – and even with the anti-Arthurian Saint's Lives.

Sometimes revealing resemblances can be added not directly with Arthurian tales, but with the Celtic materials so often felt to be related to them: as when Syrdon plays a trick on an expedition of the Narts in which they are helplessly stuck to the seats in the dwelling of their enemies the giants;⁴¹ so Finn and his men are held prisoner by Mitac and his men stuck to their seats.⁴² Characteristically, the Irish fight their way out, while Syrdon does his rescue by trickery (getting the giants to argue over riddles, and the like). Some at least of such comparisons must raise the question as to whether parts of this material belong to Indo-European folklore in general, specific neither to Celt nor Scyth.⁴³ There is also an important parallel outside Arthurian literature between the Nart tales and legends of St George,⁴⁴ whose history should warn us that not every English national figure can be assumed to be native.

This survival of Caucasian oral heroic material preserved as a body of ethnic tradition would not be unique. A useful comparison is offered by the body of material from south of the Black Sea that survives as the heritage of the Oghuz Turks in the late medieval *Book of Dede Korkut*.⁴⁵ Just as there are traces of an Achilleid in the Nart tales of Batraz, there are here traces once more of 'Uryssmaeg' in yet another version of the Polyphemus story, but we also find a heroic return legend, a heroic impersonation as in the legend of Achilles and

Patroclus, and a wooing expedition corresponding in some detail to a rudimentary land-bound *Argonautica*. Once more we meet a central warrior camaraderie, with *aristeia* of individual warriors (Bamsi Beyrak, Kanli Koja, and others) moving in variant combinations from tale to tale; and more explicitly than in either Homeric or Arthurian tradition, the central presence of a recording bard, Dede Korkut himself, ready to take up an exploit the moment it is completed, and celebrate it at the next public occasion of the nomadic Oghuz. This material is many centuries older than the oldest oral folklore recorded from the Caucasus, and is very unlikely to have been borrowed from the West; it can therefore offset the accusation that the very similar Nart materials are not proven to be earlier than the nineteenth century.

'Scythian' romance in Antiquity

The most obvious objections to such materials, medieval or modern, has been that they are not clearly proven to date from Antiquity itself.⁴⁶ It seems all the stranger, therefore, that proponents of the Scythian hypothesis seem quite unaware that there is a small amount of material well known in the classical world to claim Scythian provenance, or at the very least to be set in Scythia itself. Most striking of such texts is Lucian's *Toxaris* (second century AD), in which a Scythian apologist for his own culture recites no fewer than five tales he claims as native, to contrast with a similar set of Greek tales. The third tale is a short but full-blown romance (see Appendix 4). It portrays a society which relies on fast movement on horseback, as opposed to the epic world of the chariot, or the Greek romance technique of voyage and capture by pirates, and to which the routine of capturing the right bride is second nature:

A humble Scythian Arsacomas claims the hand of the daughter of the king of Bosphorus Leucanor, offering as his dowry his two friends Macentes and Lonchates; he is laughed out of court and the girl given to a rich rival. Outraged at the insult, he raises a huge army while one of his friends poses as an ambassador and beheads Leucanor, while the other abducts the girl still a virgin from her newly acquired husband under pretext of safe conduct. The great battle duly takes place, and thanks to the efforts of all three friends Arsacomas is able to marry his bride after all.

Much space in the narrative is spent supplying it with what from a Greek perspective would be regarded as 'Scythian' décor: covered wagons, drinking-bouts, severed heads, and the rest. But irrespective of the authenticity or even the tone of the tale, Lucian's authorship has considerable significance. He himself was a native of Samosata, a town on the Euphrates in the former client kingdom of Commagene.⁴⁷ He was among the best placed of almost any classical writers we know to pick up Iranian or Caucasian oral tradition, for all

his cultural loyalties to the rhetorical tradition of a new-Classical Athens.⁴⁸ He has been suspected in the past, not least by this author, of doctoring his materials, where he does not actually invent them, and of improvising on the 'classic' raw materials of Herodotus.⁴⁹ But even from this most sceptical of viewpoints, the above tale still represents what an eastern member of the late Antique Graeco-Roman world could present as a plausibly Scythian narrative. Moreover, Lucian's plot outline does recur in Shota Rustaveli's celebrated medieval epic *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*.⁵⁰ The action concerns a cheated lover helped by the separate operations of two friends, though the differences of detail and emphasis suggest an independent composition. The narrator Avtandil of Arabia is set to marry Princess Tinatin, but holds up his own wedding to help his newly acquired friend the Indian Prince Tariel find and marry his beloved Princess Nestan-Darejan; his master had offered her to a rival in spite of Tariel's loyal service and superior entitlement; Tariel himself had killed the undeserving rival. The first friend Nuradin-Phridon is able to report a crucial sighting of Nestan; Avtandil and he help Tariel to extricate the princess from the fortress of Khadjis where she is held prisoner. The crucial difference is that in Rustaveli the friends are acquired as the story evolves, whereas in Lucian the friendships themselves constituted the crucial claim of Arsacomas to Leucanor's daughter. Moreover, we have another such rescue tale noted in Lucian and Ovid, both of whom insist that the Scythians as well as the Greeks commemorate the story of Orestes and Pylades' removal of Iphigenia from the Taurians;⁵¹ and we have fragmentary papyrus evidence of a romance of Calligone with Sarmatian connexions.⁵²

All in all this evidence can only underline that the Greeks *thought* there was a Scythian oral tradition extending to tales, especially of heroic abduction and rescue, and it still may not prove to the satisfaction of the most sceptical that the Nart tales are ancient. But it has to be added as cumulative evidence to the already considerable picture of a heroic warrior culture among the Scythians enshrined in Herodotus himself, and one in which tales of warrior feuds play a significant part.⁵³

Celt v. Scyth: the question of cultural connexions

The familiar model of the diffusion of Arthurian material has been that of an original core of Celtic legend and pseudo-history diffused in late medieval France by Breton *conteurs* and developed in French in the first instance into more ambitious romances. Littleton-Malcor have offered a different model for the early stages, with a first contact of the Britons under the early Roman empire with Sarmatians and an Arthur figure, then a saturation of the Continent in Late Antiquity with Alanic settlement and the establishing of Scythian folklore in western Europe.

This view requires substantial qualification in cultural terms. In the first place we cannot rule out survivals of a preliterate Indo-European heritage.

Whether or not the original epicentre of Indo-European languages was the Caucasus,⁵⁴ the tales told in such a language group were perfectly capable of having been spread by oral tradition long before we can pick them up in analogues of wide geographical diffusion. Moreover, much of our material has the cultural fingerprints of a society looking back at a heroic age.⁵⁵ It is well established that the Celts shared a number of features of their heroic culture with those of the Thracians, Phrygians and Scythians in the first place,⁵⁶ a matter somewhat obscured by Littleton-Malcor, who emphasise the differences – and note the absence of chariot-fighting in Arthurian tales. Another neglected factor is the wide diffusion of the Celts in continental Europe, long before the Scyths of Late Antiquity. In the course of their reported migrations the Celts were established in Spain and Gaul, but also in the Hellenistic period as far eastwards as Galatia in Northern Anatolia.⁵⁷ Ironically they were fortifying hilltops in Galatia earlier than the Dark Age fortifications claimed by Alcock as Arthurian in sub-Roman Cadbury.⁵⁸ We should note also that Celts travelled widely as mercenaries in the Hellenistic world,⁵⁹ in fact as far afield as Sarmatians were to do in the Roman Empire. We even hear of an unruly group in Egypt, reported only because of an exceptional incident.⁶⁰ And an Ionian Greek city in western Asia Minor, Phocaea, only a few kilometres south of Kyme, from which we can produce an unnoticed Arthurian candidate, had a cultural toehold in Gaul (at Massalia, Emporion and elsewhere) even before the Celts are certain to have arrived there themselves; their first contact was with a Ligurian tribe, the Segobrigae. We should reflect that at the date of the founding of this outpost of Hellenism in the West the successes and failures of the Lydians of the previous century would have been both hot news and home news to any Greeks resident on the Ionian seaboard of Asia Minor, smarting as they would have been from the interference of the Lydian King Gyges himself.⁶¹ In such contexts the eccentric claims of Trojan or 'Milesian' connexions by the British or Irish in the later Middle Ages⁶² begin to look a great deal less fanciful: their veracity was discredited in an age when theories of cultural diffusion were divorced from literary study, and the claims should be noted with due caution.⁶³

Add to this the normal diffusion of stories in any context where wide travel was possible. In the second century AD, the Syrian belletrist Lucian has his Scythian reciting Scythian tales in Athens; he himself travelled as far as Gaul (whether before or after his main Scythian piece, the *Toxaris*), and he himself claims to have heard an *interpretatio Celtica* of Heracles as Ogmios. Not long before Lucian we encounter Dio Chrysostom, with his Allegory of Sovereignty revealed to Heracles; and Dio himself purports to tell a Persian tale in a Greek outpost in Scythia.⁶⁴ Such figures might be suspiciously plausible at times, but they are real, travelled as sophists, and could transplant a story from one end of the Roman Empire to the other as the fancy took them; one thinks too of the case of Antiochus of Aegeae, well documented in the second century AD as purveying a tale of Perseus to the people of Argos, because of

their metropolis' connexion with the story.⁶⁵ We cannot in such circumstances afford to reconstruct too narrow a line of transmission for the exploits of an Artorius or similarly named figures.

Artorius Castus again

The most promising development so far in this author's view has been the combination of the 'Scythian hypothesis' with the battle-sites in 'Nennius'. The methods of sifting a likely sequence of such sites have proved in the past to be highly controversial, and a fair number of plausible but uncertain itineraries have been advanced, usually from a largely archaeological perspective.⁶⁶ Malcor's trump card has been to bring to bear a detailed CV of Lucius Artorius Castus from epigraphic sources and surrounding Roman history, much of it very secure indeed and from contemporary or near-contemporary witness.⁶⁷

The result is a picture very different from the Dark Age meanderings of the age of Gildas and after. Artorius Castus turns out to have a widespread career, ranging from postings in Syria and Judaea to Britain, including a prestigious appointment with the Roman Navy at Misenum. Moreover, it included the suppression of a revolt in Armorica, giving the picture of Arthur crossing over to France. It gives him command of a substantial force of *Iazyges*, and properly justifies the use of terms like *miles* and *dux bellorum*; and it offers yet another plausible itinerary for 'Nennius' notorious battle-list, but this time *linked to an independently attested career*. This figure is at the very least a serious contender for a British Arthur, and one who in contrast to Riothamus⁶⁸ actually presents something like the actual name. It gives us the possibility of an Arthur in second-century Romano-British history. And it seriously weakens the claims of a fair number of the Dark Age contenders at a stroke.

The whole scenario is based on Dio Cassius' account of a Pictish and Caledonian revolt which took place in the 180s AD. Some of the siege battles would naturally have been at Roman fortified sites; and in a Romano-British context any settlement of any amenity would expect to have baths of some description, so that the traditional site implied by 'Nennius' to be Bath for Mons Badonis need not be insisted upon. Against this new chronological spectrum Malcor's battle-sites themselves are at least inherently plausible. She departs from Jackson's identification of 'Nennius' Bregouin by proposing Bremmenetacum (Ribchester). We should note that the purview of this site included two other sites with key Arthurian associations: Camboglanna (Castlesteads) and Avallana (Burgh-by-Sands):⁶⁹ this would give us a Camlann and Avallon to go back to. She further interprets *urbs legionis* not as the usual Chester or Caerleon but as York, again in the proposed circumstances plausibly. Mons Badonis then becomes Dumbarton Rock,⁷⁰ appropriate in relation to the western end of the Antonine Wall. As usual there is room for argument, or scepticism of an arbitrary hypothesis several centuries too early; but the

availability of an actual Artorius with an established military reputation is a very substantial consideration.

One problem with Lucius Artorius as Arthur is that he was probably not killed in battle in Britain. He would still have been at the height of his military career in the 180s. But the retirement of Castus from the British scene does not disqualify him. He could have been wounded at Camboglanna and withdrawn to recover at Avallan, then switched from there to Italy and Liburnia. The Iazyges could have added a traditional departure myth to their departing hero. From their point of view a posting in Italy left his return possible in any later hour of need.⁷¹ One advantage of constructing an Arthur on the CV of Artorius Castus is that his equestrian family belonged to Campania and he himself returned there after British service: this might serve to explain why Arthur became such a conspicuous legendary presence in Italy.⁷²

On the other hand, if we extend our reading of Romano-British history a little further forward we have a serious revolt in Britain under the early years of Septimius Severus led by one Albinus;⁷³ this might suggest a death for Artorius in the instabilities resulting from the revolt of Albinus in 196 AD: was he the Mordred figure we need to complete the picture? These two alternatives might account for the contradiction between the traditions of a mortally wounded Arthur and of one expected to return; but they also underline the constant vulnerability of guesswork in an area where contrary hypothesis remains equally attractive.

This career trajectory unfortunately does not give us a Camelot: had Artorius had a southern base in Roman Britain it would have brought Camulodunum back into play, but it does not fit Artorius' postings. It does not give us a king either, nor does it give us a nephew Gawain, a Holy Graal legend and much else. It does however give us an Arthur figure contemporary with the composition of what we shall argue to be our earliest Tristan Romance, dating from the 160s AD at the end of the Parthian War;⁷⁴ also one much closer to the possible adventures of any Joseph of Arimathea in Britain. The late second century is the age of the rain-miracle accounts under Marcus Aurelius, sometimes attributed to a Christian 'thundering legion'.⁷⁵ It is not an unlikely milieu for a 'historical' Arthur-figure.

So far, then, we have looked briefly at the available perspectives for Arthurian candidates inside Britain itself, or at least associated with these islands. Artorius Castus is a promising candidate who is both earlier than the Dark Age Arthurs and has a substantial continental dimension. The Littleton-Malcroft hypothesis postulates a completely continental tradition in the Nart Sagas; but even if we cannot put a date on the traditional Nart materials earlier than their collection in the nineteenth century, nor connect them directly with recognisably 'Arthurian' names, we can still offer evidence of an apparently 'Scythian' romantic tradition in Antiquity itself. And there may well be older British and other material implied but not proven to exist in the vernacular romances. But *much* older non-British candidates can be found with directly recognisable

'Arthurian' names. And it is their very existence that must necessarily be seen to undermine the credibility of Dark Age candidates, except as very late arrivals, not to say interlopers, on the Arthurian scene. And they will also serve to shift our focus much further to the east.

A FIRST ARKTOUROS: KING ARKAS OF ARCADIA

So far we have been looking at a traditional British picture of Arthur, and at an Artorius with British connexions who could be seen as a plausible import and intruder. But the latter and his possible connexions with 'Scythian' folklore leave us with another question: how many more Arthurs might have gone unnoticed, for whatever reason? And how much earlier than the traditional fifth/sixth-century British date can we expect to find them?

We need to look first of all at criteria for recognising any potential 'Arthurian' figure in the first place. There are some obvious primary characteristics, any one of which should rightly be taken into account: the name Arthur/Arturus or its continental vernacular form Artus, or any philologically convincing variation of either; the name of known associates, like Lancelot, Tristan or Gawain, or again their numerous spelling variations; the idea of a knightly fellowship, or a Round Table, or some variation on them; a context of early national hero status and later survival in some kind of immortality; and any resemblance in general or in particular to the characteristic Arthurian repertoire of stories. These might obviously include some equivalent to 'repelling Saxon invaders'; or to the content of the early Welsh heroic materials, or the fabulous content of the French *lais* and romances, or the folktale analogues of any of these categories. The earlier the better for any such materials, as later examples will run the risk of having been drawn from the original British material transported elsewhere in the great explosion of Arthurian sources across Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Contradictions with the medieval Arthurian tradition in individual points do not necessarily disqualify a candidate, since the tradition itself is so fluid: not every Arthur needs to be established as having a wife Guinevere, since the Arthur of British tradition has more than one partner, and in any case any combination of Arthurian motifs must be allowed some possibility of evolution. One conclusion follows from the identification of any 'pre-Arthurian' candidate who bears a close equivalent of the name itself. The Dark Age British Arthur, if he turns out not to be chronologically the first, must surrender any reasonable claim to be 'the' King Arthur as opposed to simply 'our' King Arthur, or indeed just one in a possibly indefinite succession. We need in all this to resist the rhetoric of any 'quest for the real Arthur'.

The most we can realistically be content with is the earliest clearly discernible Arthur-figure by that name in what might appear to be a resilient and ever-lengthening tradition.

Arcturus/Arktouros

There has to my knowledge been no scholarly awareness of a mythico-legendary King Arthur in classical or pre-classical Antiquity, on Greek soil, where our mythological and legendary materials are richest. The natural place to start is the name Arthur itself, and it is at this first hurdle that a great many Arthurian scholars have fallen, indeed since the nineteenth century. Geoffrey Ashe has put the whole matter in the form of a challenge, and its terms are worth quoting at length:¹

In the midst of these perplexities, one fact does emerge, the significance of Arthur's name. It is the Welsh for the Roman name Artorius, and clearly suggests a real person born in the fifth century, when the custom of giving children Roman names still flourished among the Britons. . . . The name tells against the conjecture, which the Welsh matter has sometimes encouraged, that Arthur is not a man but a myth: perhaps a Celtic god, euhemerized. Plainly, such a figure is not likely to have borne a Roman name, and a human one at that. Advocates of the myth theory have failed to find a god called Artorius or to give 'Arthur' a viable alternative etymology. Arthur's saga certainly involved touches of what may be described as mythification . . . but the notion of him as wholly mythical or divine has proved unsustainable. Would-be reconstructions by Raglan, Darrah, and others are more completely incompatible than their historical counterparts.

The (fairly frequent) bearers of the name Artorius other than Castus do not indeed offer anything mythological. What, then, does the name mean? The Sawley glosses on 'Nennius' connected it with bears – *arth* in Welsh ('bear') and *utbr* ('horrible'), to produce inter alia the suggestion 'horrible bear'.² The first part of this derivation might be thought more convincing than the second, though there is a reasonable chance of losing the second *th* by dissimilation. But this is an explanation in any case that was written by its Sawley scribe c.1200. We have, however, far earlier material than this, without the attendant difficulty, in a language all but unknown to Arthurian scholars, as it was unknown to their medieval predecessors – classical Greek. Here the term *arktouros* means 'bear-warder', 'bear-keeper', and refers to the giant star Arcturus in the constellation Bootes,³ already referred to in the agricultural poetry of the early archaic period (c.700 BC),⁴ and in later Antiquity loosely identified with Bootes itself. Arktouros was spelled Arcturus in Latin, with the same meaning; it invites reduction of the intervocalic cluster *rkt*, so that the medial *c* in the Latin form is simply effaced, a normal process in any period of Latin.⁵

It is a simple matter of record that the spelling Arcturus is found for Arthur in standard editions of medieval texts;⁶ and no less so that medieval writers used the form Arthurus for Arcturus when talking about the star itself. John of Howden's thirteenth-century *Cythera* refers to the *giram Arthuri*, 'Arthur's round', when discussing astronomical movement of the star, and he is not alone.⁷ Arthurian scholars are persistently misled by the occurrence as a proper name of Artorius, not related to Arcturus by the *Thesaurus*, but easily enough confused with it.⁸ Even when they do note this etymology, scholars seem to be unable to follow its implications, and simply see it as an association claimed by a still Dark Age Arthur.⁹ In other words, the star would give its name to the king – but whose name does the star itself adopt, in a society given to promoting its legendary figures routinely to the stars?

Failure to recognise the historical implications of an Arthur associated with Arcturus means that scholars have cut themselves off for most of the twentieth century from any possibility of tracing the mythology attached to the name itself; those who assume a Celtic root naturally do not take the matter further in any case. But we have the obligation to ask whether the inevitable mythological or legendary explanation lying behind the star-name Arktoouros/Arcturus in the first place might have anything to do with King Arthur. The mythology in question is in fact a matter reasonably well documented in conventional sources for classical myth, though many of the details remain almost persistently inaccessible, all the more surprisingly in standard handbooks and indexes.¹⁰ Accounts with varying degrees of contradiction can be put together from the fragments of the Hesiodic corpus; the mythographic writers including Apollodorus and Hyginus; writers on star-lore in particular, including Ps.-Eratosthenes and Hyginus once more;¹¹ Pausanias' account of Arcadia; and a good deal of material drawn from scholiasts and commentators. Here is a brief resumé of the background of the name Arcturus as it conveniently appears in Servius *auctus*, a Virgilian commentary demonstrably based on antique tradition, though of early medieval date. The passage¹² is explaining how Arcturus comes to be associated with autumn storms:

arcturus enim pluviarum et tempestatum (sidus est.) arcturus autem idem arctofylax, qui post u(rsae caudam) locatus sit; idem bootes, quod boves cum plaustro agat. alii Arcadem fuisse filium Callistus et Iovis (dicunt; qui) cum matrem in figuram ursae Iunonis (ira transfigurata) vellet occidere, ambo in caelum (a Iove translati sunt, et) ille arcturus, illa Helice dicta. alii (hunc Icarium volunt) esse, qui a pastoribus, quod eos vino tunc (primum reperto) ebrios fecerat, veluti dato veneno occisus (est).

For arcturus is the star of rains and storms. Now *arcturus* is the same as *arctofylax*, ('bear-guardian'), because it was placed behind the bear's tail; it is also the same as *bootes*, the ox driver, because it drives oxen with a cart. Some say it was Arkas the son of Callisto and Jupiter:

when he wanted to kill his mother, transformed into the form of a bear by the anger of Juno, both were transformed into the sky by Jupiter, and he took the name *Arcturus*, she the name *Helice*.¹³ Others wish arcturus to be Icarius, who was killed by shepherds because he had made them drunk with wine, then newly discovered, and they thought they had been poisoned.¹⁴

All the information is already available in authentically classical sources themselves; I choose this late and slightly imprecise witness¹⁵ because it connects Arcturus with not just two but three possibly separate narrative strands, as yet a third convergent tale can in due course be attached separately to the constellation Bootes as a whole; all the significant information is attested by the Early Roman Empire at the latest. This gives us a connection with stories about Arkas, Icarius, and with Philomelus,¹⁶ the conventional earthly equivalent of Bootes. Under the name or title Arcturus their respective legends could easily coalesce into the exploits of a single figure, and show a considerable degree of congruence in any case. This may well be because they reflect local variants of the same culture-hero in the first place.¹⁷ Most of all: these sources show us an Arthur, in some cases a king, doing mythical things rather than merely reflected in place-names.

The most important figure of the three for our purposes is Arkas of Arcadia, whom we can now refer to as Arkas/Arktouros, since we should expect an ancient figure to be referred to by his highest honour (we refer to Divus Augustus, not Octavian). Arktouros indicates quite literally the star status of a figure of remote legend. We should now look at the evidence for his earthly career as king of the ancient race of Pelasgians, stellar transformations notwithstanding.¹⁸

After Nyctimus' death, Arkas(-Arktouros), the son of Callisto, came to power. This man introduced domestic crops, which he was taught by Triptolemus, and he taught how to make bread and weave clothing and other things; wool-working he had learnt from 'Adristas'.¹⁹ From his reign onwards the land was called Arcadia instead of Pelasgia, and its people were known as Arcadians instead of Pelasgians. And he lived, they used to say, with a woman who was no ordinary mortal but a Dryad . . . her name was Erato, and from her they say he had three sons, Azan, Apheidas and Elatus; he already had a bastard son before this called Autolaos. And Arkas divided the country into three among his sons when they grew up. . . . And when his son Azan died the first athletic contests were held. Horse-racing was established, but I do not know about any others.

That is the longest block of 'hard information' (as opposed to poetic rhetoric) that we are likely to be offered about the context of Arkas-Arktouros. Elsewhere

Pausanias points out a burial site, by the Altars of the Sun in Mantinea, to which the king's remains had been transferred at the behest of Delphi.²⁰ But the present testimony changes the balance of evidence very substantially. It puts Arkas/Arktouros at a critical point in mythological chronology: after the creation, and as we shall see, contemporary with the flood, when men are discovering civilisation under divine patronage. All too often this stratum of mythological time, corresponding to the biblical age of Noah, receives little more than a few lines of genealogy in the literary prehistory or surviving folk-memory of a people. But it goes far towards accounting for the overriding prestige of the name Arktouros. Here is a figure who can for the first time be proven rather than guessed to be something more than some small-time Dark Age *dux bellorum*: he is indeed a patriarchal icon favoured by the gods and immeasurably benefiting mankind – and that in an area which often retained its remote and legendary image in the Greece of even historical times.²¹

The agricultural aspect of Arkas/Arktouros should come as no surprise to those familiar with 'early' strata of Arthurian material, often emerging in written texts only later than Geoffrey of Monmouth. When Arthur is supporting the claim of his cousin Culhwch to marry a giant's daughter in the Welsh tale *Culhwch and Olwen*, the giant begins his demands:

'Dost thou see the great thicket yonder? . . . I must have it uprooted out of the earth and burnt on the face of the ground so that the cinders and ashes thereof be its manure; and that it be ploughed and sown so that it be ripe in the morning against the drying of the dew, in order that it may be made into meat and drink for thy wedding guests and my daughter's. And all that I must have done in one day.'

The giant requires likewise the yoking of two oxen, the preparation of flax, and the provision of the best drink in a named vessel.²² All this will be done by appropriate members of Arthur's team, so that Arthur himself is implied to have the finest and quickest agricultural workers at his disposal. This corresponds to the reputation of a trainee of Triptolemus who can also make cloth, and with the story of Icarius the wine-producer noted below. We should also note the capacity of Arthurian heroes to prepare or clear land, in particular by the uprooting of trees; we shall see Arkas' own ability below to move a river banking and shore up a tree in the middle of a flood-storm.²³

All this clearly identifies Arkas/Arktouros as what mythologists will call a 'culture-hero'. It is worthwhile to quote the profile of such a figure given by E.K. Chambers, ironically in order to play down this very aspect of Arthur's activities. Early man comes to believe that:²⁴

Some real or imagined ancestor must have been in closer touch with the gods than ordinary men, and must have won the rudiments of this civilization for his successors. He visited the remote and normally

inaccessible Otherworld, where are all good things in inexhaustible abundance, and by cajolery or violence obtained its treasures from their friendly or reluctant keepers. This is the culture hero. He taught men the uses of agriculture and waymaking and song, and rid them of giants and monsters with the magic weapons won in his quest. He is a mediator between god and man, and in time he comes to be thought of as himself in some sense divine. Perhaps he was the son of a god, and perhaps when his time on earth was ended he did not linger about his grave, like the ghosts of common men, but went back to that happy Otherworld, which took shape, with varying geographical conditions, in the parallel fancies of the Land Overseas and the Hollow Hill.

It is difficult to improve on this extended definition, or indeed to imagine any other that would do better justice to the first two pieces of evidence just quoted on Arkas/Arktouros; and no features it covers are left out of subsequent evidence we shall look at. All we might be tempted to add is that culture-heroes often excite some degree of envy or friction which brings them ultimately to an unfortunate end, and this we shall see as part of the overall picture in due course.

A community of the Table

So far, then, a king with at least some supernatural connexions through his mother and father, and indeed his wife. He is the eponymous founder and civiliser, moreover, of an ancient, wild and remote terrain, associated with a Golden Age of pastoral Utopia rather than a Golden Age of chivalry.²⁵ But the most important feature from an Arthurian point of view is the context offered by his grandfather on his mother's side, Pelasgus' own son King Lycaon. Here our evidence, while tantalising, is also particularly early:²⁶

It is said that Arkas is the son of Callisto and Zeus . . . and Lycaon pretended not to be aware that Zeus had raped his daughter: he entertained Zeus, according to Hesiod, cut up the child and laid him on the table. At which Zeus overturned the table – from which the city gets its name Trapezous – struck his house with a thunderbolt, and changed Lycaon into a wolf. He then put Arkas together again and made him whole; and the child was nourished by a herdsman.

Here then, human sacrifice by Arkas/Arktouros' grandfather, his miraculous reconstitution by Zeus – and a city named 'Table', somewhat oddly. But we can see this aspect of Arktouros in a much more familiar light in later mythography. Here is Hyginus, *Fabula* 176, from the first century AD:

sed Lycaonis filii Iovem tentare voluerunt, deusne esset; carnem humanam cum cetera carne commiscuerunt idque in epulo ei apposuerunt. Qui postquam sensit, iratus mensam evertit, Lycaonis filios fulmine necavit. eo loco postea Arkas oppidum communivit, quod Trapezus nominatur.

but the sons of Lycaon wanted to test Jupiter to see whether he was a god; they mixed human flesh with other flesh and put it in front of him at a feast. After he became aware of this, he overturned the table in a rage, and killed Lycaon's sons with a thunderbolt. In that place Arkas later fortified a town which is called Trapezous.

Here it is Lycaon's *sons*, not their father, who practise cannibalism; the interesting detail for any story of King Arthur is that Arkas/Arktouros founds a community actually *called* Table – as any King Arthur ought to do. And he does it for a variation of the same reason as that given in Arthurian texts themselves. Layamon, the Middle English poet who is first to mention the Round Table at any length in the chronicle tradition following Geoffrey of Monmouth, explains that the king wanted to avoid the bloodshed that previous quarrels at table had caused among his men, and so a Cornish craftsman offered to construct a table that would put an end to violence.²⁷ That is in effect what Arkas/Arktouros is doing: human sacrifices have been abolished in Arcadia by the displeasure of Zeus; now Arkas-Arktouros puts a table-town in their place. We should now take up a point in the extract just noted from Pausanias, that there was horse-racing established at the death of his son Azan. We do not know that Arktouros himself introduced this, because it is not clear that he is still alive and that his son had predeceased him (as one of Arthur's sons is indeed alleged to have done²⁸); but within a generation of his rule there were competitive equestrian sports in Arcadia: we have a competitive horse-riding (or rather chariot-racing)²⁹ culture within the close family of Arkas/Arktouros himself. We have Arkas at the centre of a civilisation, and immediately afterwards it is in some sense equestrian.

Calabrops and (Ex-)Calibur

The foundation of a Table community by an Arktouros might be enough in itself to suggest that this figure really is a backward extension of 'our' Arthur, and not just a coincidental bearer of the same name. But there is another very distinctive detail about Arkas/Arktouros. He is presented by a commentator on the Hellenistic poet Aratus' astronomical poem the *Phaenomena*:³⁰

And behind Helice the Bear someone like a driver is being carried along, the so-called Arctophylax. As to his resemblance to a driver, this is because he is carrying a *kalaurops* (Aldine edn *kalabrops*) in his right hand, as if holding on to the cart, the bear, with his left. For he

himself seems to be the guardian of the cart, called the bear, as Bootes (the herdsman), who in driving the oxen (from) it carries a *kalaurops*, which is a club.³¹

The cart driver and Arctophylax are of course to be identified once more as Arktouros, and in his hand he holds an offensive weapon that could also be used in herding oxen or cattle. The Aldine edition of the Aratus scholia reads *kalabrop(s)*, and older editions of Liddell and Scott cite this as a common misspelling of *kalaurops* (more properly an alternative approach to transliterating a lost digamma?).³² We must bear in mind that the most distinctive attribute of Arthur other than the Round Table is his celebrated sword Ex-calibur, or Ex-calabur, first given by Geoffrey of Monmouth as Caliburnus, and in old French as Calibor(e), as well as Escalibor. I cannot see how Arktouros/Arctophylax' holding of a *kalabrops* can indicate anything other than that the Arcadian Arthur is really 'ours'. How many other Arcturi found table-communities and possess a distinctive 'calabr-'?

Merlin

Having found an Arktouros complete with his Table community within prospect of an equestrian competition and with a weapon *kalabrops*, we must now look at his divine connexions. We have already noted that he has association at least with the oak-tree nymph Erato. The name would either be identical with, or would recall, the name of the Greek Muse of lyric poetry, Erato;³³ one notes that in early Welsh tradition King Arthur is one of the three frivolous bards of Britain,³⁴ and that his half-sister and sometime lover Morgan la Fée sometimes presides over a group of *nine* Maidens who will take care of Arthur in the other world.³⁵ One notes too that Erato, wife or lover of Arkas, receives oracles of Pan, a prominent Arcadian deity;³⁶ one notes that Arthur's wife both in Welsh tradition and beyond is occasionally credited with prophecy: this seems to be the drift in the Welsh dialogue she shares with Maelwas, insofar as anything can be made of it;³⁷ but certainly in the case of her adventure at Tarn Wathelyn, where Guinevere is given a supernatural message about the fall of the king which will be delivered to him in turn. We might note that among the oddities in Heinrich von der Türlein's *Diu Krône* is an episode where a knight riding on a goat is juxtaposed with an account of prophecy from a tiny girl blown by the wind,³⁸ and so presumably fairy or otherworldly.

We know, moreover, from a tradition of 'Epimenides' that Pan was sometimes regarded as a son of Callisto by Zeus and in fact a twin brother of Arkas/Arktouros himself;³⁹ a further tradition had him as a son of Cronos, and so still an elder relative of Arkas.⁴⁰ In either relationship an oracle-giving creature, half-human, half cloven-footed beast does correspond – unexpectedly – to the conception of Merlin in Robert de Borron's Old French prose *Life of*

Merlin, where he is the offspring of a Devil father, traditionally cloven-hooved in medieval Christian tradition, and a human mother;⁴¹ and like Arkas *also*, he was offered as a child sacrifice in this same text.⁴² We unsurprisingly find Merlin in the sub-Arthurian tale of Grisandole appearing first as a stag, then as a wild man.⁴³

A hunting adventure: saving an otherworldly dove-girl

Allusion to a table, a calabr-, or a prophetic companion contribute very substantially to the case for an Arcadian King Arthur. But they do not show the king himself actually *doing* anything that he might have done in the Old French Romances. Of far greater significance is an episode about an amorous encounter of Arkas/Arktouros with a supernatural lover, which we can salvage from a convoluted variety of *scholia* to constitute a notice on Eumelus, a contemporary of Herodotus:⁴⁴

Arkas (/Arktouros) the son of Zeus or Apollo and Callisto the daughter of Lycaon . . . was hunting with his hounds and came across one of the hamadryad nymphs in danger of perishing when the oak-tree in which the nymph had been living was destroyed by a river in torrent. But Arkas turned back the river and secured the bank with an earthwork. And the nymph – her name was *Chrysopeleia* ('golden dove') – made love with him and gave birth to Elatus and Amphidamas, from whom the Arcadians came.

We have already noted that Arkas was given a hamadryad wife or mistress Erato ('lovely', 'beloved') attributed with the same child Elatus and two others, Azan and Apheidas, not mentioned here. Either Erato and Chrysopeleia are one and the same (one would associate doves in oak-trees also with prophecy, as at Dodona);⁴⁵ or they are completely different, but capable of confusion, at least as regards their children.⁴⁶

This episode may have a disproportionate consequence for the picture it gives of a mythological Arthur. It has recently been stressed that Arthur plays a part in an early Welsh poem about a tree-battle, which has been taken to furnish a mythological interpretation of the Battle of Coit Celidon (the Caledonian Forest) in 'Nennius' battle-list.⁴⁷ While our new text does not *prove* that any battle in the battle-list *was* mythical, it furnishes the correct ethos to support such a suspicion. And when we reflect that no fewer than seven of the twelve battles in the list are battles with watery associations (eight if we count Bath Mountain, *Mons Badonis*), we have yet another convergence. Real warriors did set ambushes at fords, but the prospect of an Arthur who fought hostile waters *themselves* (on behalf of animated oak-trees!) should be borne in mind. There is also the small matter of the *Greek* names of Calydon and Bassas: the

former was the site of the great heroic-age hunt organised by Oineus ('Wine-man'), and the latter might be found in Arcadia itself, as Bassae.

Arkas/Arktouros' forest adventure is frustratingly short, and told here only to lead up to the account of his children. The story of Chrysopeleia is however paralleled in several versions elsewhere:

Charon of Lampsacus⁴⁸ says that Rhoicus, seeing that an oak tree was about to topple as never before, told his slaves to prop it up. And the nymph about to die along with the tree appeared to him, thanked him for saving her life, and told him to ask her for whatever he wanted. And when he said he wanted to sleep with her, she said that no harm would come of it, but he must have nothing to do with any other woman, and their messenger would be the bee. And once the bee flew alongside while he was playing draughts. And having cried out too fiercely he angered the nymph, so that she injured him.⁴⁹

This opens up the prospect of a version of the story of the 'Quest for the Lost Wife' (Aarne-Thompson Type 400), where the king must eventually try to regain the supernatural lover, often choosing to follow her into her own otherworldly kingdom. This is a characteristic kind of narrative motif in Arthurian materials, as we shall see.

An enemy for Arcturus?

The above offers no hint of any hostile campaigns or traditional enemy for Arcturus. But Pausanias may provide a suitably sinister one: Arthur's son Elatus helps the Phocians against the Phlegyan attack on Delphi: the Thessalian Phlegyas himself is traditionally a king of the Lapiths and son of the war-god Ares. As for Elatus, he himself was credited with the foundation of Elateia;⁵⁰ this would give us a suitable 'foreign adventure' either late in the reign of Arkas or at least within a generation. Sometimes the Phlegyans are even presented as invading the Peloponnese as well, bringing them nearer to the homeland of Arkas himself.⁵¹ We should also note an Arcadian tradition reported by Pausanias: that the battle of the gods and the giants took place in the neighbourhood of Bathos and Trapezus.⁵² As the site of this battle, usually placed at Pallene in Macedonia, was known as the Phlegraean fields, we can see that both the Phlegyans and Phlegraeans could be associated with either Arcadia or with the family of Arkas: we can entertain also the possibility of confusion or even identification between them. There was certainly a cult of thunder and lightning at the Arcadian site.⁵³ The site of Bathos was also known for a biennial festival of the Great Goddesses. We should note that Table-town was well placed to absorb or combine several powerful mythological traditions: Arkas founds the site; a cult-centre of Demeter is available at Bathos, presumably as a supposed access to the underworld; while close by

is a site of the conflict of gods and giants, with thunder and lightning worship in train. The famous Phlegraeon battle is connected with the neighbourhood; while a son of Arkas defeats marauding Phlegians outside the Peloponnese. The stage is set for mythological events on a dramatic and elemental scale: Arcturus has the right kind of associations.

‘Other’ Arcturi: Arcturus-Icarius; Bootes-Philomelus

We might now pause to look in more detail at the other Arcturi noted in the Servius passage with which we began. Hyginus gives us a more detailed sketch of the connexion Icarius/Arcturus in *Fabula* 130:

When Dionysus came to mankind and showed them the sweetness and pleasant taste of his fruits (grapes) he enjoyed the lavish hospitality of Icarius and Erigone. He rewarded them with a skin full of wine, and ordered that they should propagate it to other lands. Icarius loaded his cart together with his daughter Erigone and his dog Maera and came to the shepherds in Attica and showed them how sweet the wine was. The shepherds drank the wine to excess and so fell down drunk; thinking Icarius had given them bad medicine they killed him with clubs. The whining dog showed Erigone where her father lay unburied. And when she arrived, she killed herself by hanging herself on a tree. Dionysus was enraged and inflicted the same penalty on the daughters of the Athenians. They asked for an answer from Apollo, who replied that the reason was their ignoring the murder of Icarius and Erigone. At this they punished the shepherds and instituted a festival for Erigone to commemorate the plague of hanging, with the result that they should pour a libation to Icarius and Erigone of the first fruits of the vine. And by the will of the gods they were put among the stars; Erigone is the virgin, whom we call Justice, Icarius among the stars is called Arcturus, the dog Maera is Canis Minor.

This looks a thoroughly less plausible identity for Arthur, but it is not to be dismissed out of hand. Here we have another culture-hero tale, not concerning crops this time but wine instead. The idea of King Arthur acting as a wine-waiter will occur again in still more unexplored texts in a much more ‘historical’ context elsewhere.⁵⁴ The idea that he is a martyr to wine and that there is murder during a feast we have already encountered in the story of his sacrifice by Lycaon. And the beginning of the story suggests that Arthur himself, who wins a magic cauldron in the early Welsh tradition,⁵⁵ is here given a vessel of the first wine for his hospitality: no need to *hunt* for a Holy Graal when one comes unbidden. A second version of Hyginus’ story has a more conventional plague,⁵⁶ reducing Attica to a waste land in revenge for Icarius’

death, until the murderers are caught. But the idea of Arcturus and the dog is noteworthy too. King Arthur's dog was Cabal (i.e. *caballus*, a horse).⁵⁷ Any version of her name Maera ('sparkler') or Mera (all MSS of Hyginus) heard or read in an English-based language would be misread as a word for a female horse, *maere*,⁵⁸ of which the latinising equivalent *cabal* would then be a translation. This is a difficult feature to reproduce by coincidence, and it neatly explains the striking oddity that Arthur has a dog called 'horse'. We should further note that Arthur had several connections with a Virgin:⁵⁹ Arthur goes into battle in 'Nennius' with the Virgin Mary *super humeros*; in a pre-Christian context his star is set beside the sign not of the Virgin Mary, but of the Virgin *and* the Dog Mary.⁶⁰ It should not be hard to detect some Christian piety and wishful thinking in the Dark Age account, which leaves out the dog and joins up the Virgin and Mary (Maera, Mera) into a figure its own world would have understood. In short, Arcturus' original dog Maera and the attendant Virgin, his daughter Erigone, are compressed into the Christian icon of the Virgin Mary, a personage without meaning for a pre-Christian Arcadian king or Athenian countryman. Moreover, the Virgin was interpreted by the scholiasts on ancient astronomical writing as a number of different deities,⁶¹ and at least two of them are highly relevant to Arthur: one was as Demeter, which suits Arkas/Arktouros as a pupil of her agent Triptolemus;⁶² the other was as Tyche, Fortuna. As the latter this goddess has a particularly special relationship with Arthur, one of the kings who benefits in the Alliterative Mort text from her support until his sudden fall from grace on Fortune's Wheel.⁶³

A further culture-hero tale emerges in the story of Philomelus and Plutus given by Petellidas of Cnossos.⁶⁴ Both are described as children of Demeter directly by the mortal Iasion, but the unjust Plutus refuses to share with his virtuous poor brother. The latter has to use his savings to buy two oxen from his brother, but then prospers by inventing the cart; whereupon Demeter rewards him with katasterism as Bootes. This is certainly compatible with the identification of Bootes with Arctophylax and Arcturus; if Triptolemus teaches Arkas crop-cultivation, he presumably shows him the use of the cart, or he will have to respond by inventing it.⁶⁵ It is another way of seeing the agricultural revolution presided over by Arcturus, and would connect him (as Philomelus) even more closely with Demeter. The name Philomelus ('Apple-lover', 'crop-lover') would of course particularly suit the idea that a goddess or otherworldly being spirits away an Arthurian hero to a place of apples, Avalon.⁶⁶ It also fits the folktale hinted at in the Eumelus fragment: some versions of the *Sir Launfal* story as told by Marie de France and the anonymous *Lai of Graelent* emphasise that the knight whom the otherworldly goddess sleeps with and eventually takes away is a *poor* knight whom she herself makes rich by her patronage, as Demeter does Philomelus here. One notes too that in some Arthur-and-Kay stories, at least, Kay is a dishonest fellow who tries to cheat his brother (as in the Prose Merlin story, where Kay claims to his father Entor that he himself had drawn the sword from the stone⁶⁷). We shall see in due course that

our other major candidate for Arthur-ship, Arduus of Lydia, has a career break selling wine and making carts: if we cannot prove that Arthur actually invented the Round Table, we can at least come close to suspecting that he should have invented the wheel

The forbidden precinct: a Chapel perilous?

The sources on Callisto and Arkas insist one way or another that either the young Arkas was about to kill his mother, or in Hesiodic tradition that she as a bear pursued by her son had entered the sacred shrine of Zeus Lykaïos and that the natives were preparing to sacrifice them both;⁶⁸ this prompts Zeus to intervene and bring about katasterism for either one, or for both at once. Pausanias gives us considerable detail on the shrine as it was in his own time, and is clearly somewhat embarrassed to imply that human sacrifice is still practised there:

Mount Lykaion offers some amazing features, but the most striking of all is this. It has a precinct of Lykaian Zeus, which no human is allowed to enter. For anyone who disregards this law and goes in it is inevitable to die within the year. And it was also said that anything inside the precinct, either man or beast, casts no shadow; and so when a hunted beast takes refuge there, the hunter is unwilling to leap in with it, but stays outside observing the animal, and sees no shadow from it. . . .

On the highest summit of the mountain is a mound of earth which serves as an altar of Lykaian Zeus, from which there is a view of most of the Peloponnese. And in front of the altar are two pillars that face the rising sun: the gilded eagles on these pillars are even older than the pillars themselves. On this altar they offer a secret sacrifice to Lykaian Zeus. I could take no pleasure in enquiring too closely about this sacrifice; let it be as it is and as it has been from the beginning.⁶⁹

We should note that the trespass into a forbidden precinct in the forest is a recurrent cliché of Arthurian tradition, and in particular of the 'Bear's Son' folktale that we shall look at next. Usually the scenario is that the youngest of three sons, or one of a pair of knights, is left to cook a meal in a deserted hall when they are attacked by a dwarf, a giant or a wild beast, or some combination, and that at least one of the intruders (usually Sir Kay in the first instance) is ignominiously beaten up, often by an irate dwarf whom he has in some obvious way insulted.⁷⁰ Sometimes the superior courtesy of Sir Gawain acts to pacify local wrath,⁷¹ sometimes not. In 'Bear's Son' stories the youngest intruder, the hero, wounds the beast and pursues it into the Otherworld. We can suspect at least that the empty hall and the ominous precinct are two ways of looking at the same situation.

Conclusion

It is time to reach a judgement on the new materials we have reviewed so far in an Arthurian context. We can say at the outset that Ashe's challenge has been answered head-on. There is a phonologically satisfactory derivation of Arthur that links his name immediately to exactly the kind of mythological materials towards which Padel, Darrah and Green have been striving – in the wrong country. These give us, quite simply, a decisively early King Arthur figure *by name* in the fabulously legendary Greek kingdom of Arcadia. We have his community Trapezous – he founds or fortifies the city or town of Table, and brings his country with supernatural aid into civilisation; he or his stellar namesake comes into possession of the secret of wine – not without the consequence of a waste land, and the invention of the cart. He has a hunting adventure that brings him an otherworldly lover, a feat of physical strength and courage, and most probably in the extension of the story the beginnings of a 'lost and recovered bride' tale – some of the very essence of Arthurian romance, as we shall see. He has an odd weapon, out of which we can extrapolate the distinctive label *calabr-*, and even a dog capable of having his name *mis*understood as 'horse'. If we look further in the legendary map of Arcadia we shall come across a supposedly ancient foundation Phigalia/Phialia whose latter form would associate its towering heights with a phiale or vessel – and so a Graal castle; we have Arkas laid to rest in a town called 'Prophet-town' (Mantineia), a suitable environment for the associate of an already diabolic and indeed cloven-hooved Merlin-figure.

In other words we can say that the romantic aspects of the Arthurian world were clearly enough in place as early as Pausanias in the early Roman Empire, and that he was literally a star, by the name Arktouros, by the time of Hellenistic astronomical theory and poetry. It may be worth noting that this stellar connection did not entirely escape the Medieval world. In the first large-scale evocation of Arthur in Medieval literature, Geoffrey of Monmouth, we already find (*Historia* 8.14f.):

While these things were happening at Winchester, there appeared a star of great magnitude and brilliance, with a single beam shining from it. At the end of this beam was a ball of fire, spread out in the shape of a dragon. From the dragon's mouth stretched forth two rays of light, one of which seemed to extend its length beyond the latitude of Gaul, while the second turned towards the Irish Sea and split up into seven smaller shafts of light. . . .

(Merlin's interpretation:) 'The star signifies you [Uther], in person, and so does the fiery dragon beneath the star. The beam of light, which stretches towards the shore of Gaul, signifies your son, who will be a most powerful man. His dominion shall extend over all the kingdoms which the beam covers. The second ray signifies your daughter, whose

sons and grandsons shall hold one after the other the kingship of Britain.'

It can safely be said that at least in some measure the stellar significance of Arcturus as Arthur was recognised in the mainstream tradition of Arthurian literature. Whether the description tallies precisely with Ancient and Medieval 'constellation geography' is more difficult. Geoffrey's description might be seen as acknowledging the position of the constellation Draco in reasonable proximity to Ursa Major (i.e. Arcturus' parent Callisto in classical katas-terisms); Ursa Minor, which would offer the seven stars of Uther's daughter; and Bootes, containing Arcturus itself. But I doubt if Geoffrey or his source had the technical information for anything more than the most dramatic and approximate description, in itself probably influenced by the predetermined interpretation. But whether there is a genuine astronomical observation or a purely fictitious portent, Arthur is already seen in the sky.

If we are left asking, why should Arcturus of Arcadia become Arcturus of the Britons, one unexpected congruence suggests itself. 'Nennius' gives us Brutus of Trojan ancestry as the source of the name Britain; Geoffrey of Monmouth gives him an extensive sojourn in Greece, and most probably the Peloponnese itself (winning a victory at 'Sparatinum', 1.5); and Brutus in Latin would mean stupid or animal-like – as brute still does. Any *Latin* source (we have none to hand for this detail) might easily have presented the Arcadians as *bruti*: their lifestyle as Pelasgians is one of acorn-eating, breadless and clothless poverty, from which Arkas/Arktouros raises them, with divine assistance. But nothing need depend on such a postulate; the facts of a Greek Arthur's identity are more than sufficiently established without it. It simply offers a particularly plausible possibility to aid his transmission.

What we have not been able to do so far is link the various isolated fragments of astronomical commentary and other mythography to a central repertoire of tales, and that is where we can hope to draw on the convergent elements of Arkadian tradition, Arthurian texts, and ancient and modern folktale.

ARKTOUROS II: THE EVIDENCE FROM FOLKTALE

So far we have looked at the ancient Greek traditions of Arkas/Arktouros on their own terms. But we can also use a different kind of material, to relate them still more closely to both medieval Arthurian tradition and to the central repertoire of tales to which it in turn owes much of its material. A word of explanation is necessary at this point to those unfamiliar with how international folktales work. Arthurian scholars are particularly familiar with the speed with which versions of Arthurian tales spread in the twelfth century AD and beyond, following the success of the chronicle tradition that surfaces first in Geoffrey of Monmouth, and in the Romance industry (for such it became) after the initial impact of Chrétien de Troyes. Many have taken seriously the possibility, or indeed the inevitability, of an oral contribution to the spread of the material, whether in the hands of Breton *conteurs* or other kinds of storyteller, both before and after this supposedly first literary élan. But rather fewer have come to terms with the relation between Arthurian materials and international folktale as a whole. Folktales themselves have undergone the same process of diffusion and development as Arthurian materials, but over a timetable which is now well beyond our capacity to recover. Occasional and sometimes fiercely disputed efforts have been made to link this or that Arthurian motif, incident or incident-pattern with those of the kind of folklore found, for example, in Grimm's Fairy Tales or the numerous national collections and folk-archives which for well over a century have attempted to collect, analyse and organise the world's (and particularly Europe and the Near East's) heritage of storytelling.¹ The result has been among other attempts an international indexing system both of motifs (Stith Thompson²) and tales (Aarne and Thompson³) which has at least made comparison possible, if not always uniformly helpful, in dealing with samples of the same tale recurring in widely different times, places and cultures. In the case of tales this involves a description of the basic sequence of events in a tale-type which can at least help us to make connexions and ideally arrive at some understanding of a tale's mechanism, to say nothing of its possible early history and geographical spread.

The 'Bear's Son' tale

Such a concept can at least be applied to the materials at our disposal from ancient, medieval and modern examples of our 'Arthurian' material. Attempts to relate Arthur to bears on the strength of Welsh *arth* are foredoomed to failure: Ashe rejected them out of hand;⁴ Higham, following Padel, goes as near as he can with the possibility that Arthur's mythical reputation might be based on an otherwise unattested British bear-cult.⁵ One can go little further without a means of accessing standard narrative material on the subject, and this can only be done for all practical purposes through the Aarne-Thompson system. Since Arkas/Arktouros is quite literally the son of a bear, whether or not his mother has been changed into one before or after his birth,⁶ we should automatically relate it to the name-tale of a well-established (but not ideally documented) folktale complex, embracing the tales of 'The Bear's Son' and 'John the Bear'.⁷ This complex has been invoked more than once to apply to the adventures of celebrated Epic heroes as assorted as Beowulf and Odysseus. While analyses have not been greeted with universal approval (unsurprisingly, given the great diversity of these two examples),⁸ the tale-type is particularly useful for explaining not only much of the legendary side of Arthurian literature, but a great deal of the analogous material in classical myth and Caucasian folklore⁹ as well.

Most significantly, Arkas' father was Zeus, who seduced his mother by trickery and impersonation;¹⁰ and his mother, the nymph Kallisto, either before or after the end of her pregnancy, was changed either by friend or foe into a bear.¹¹ 'The Bear's Son' and 'John the Bear' embody a pair of sometimes overlapping, sometimes independent international folktales, Aarne-Thompson Types 301 and 650, very widespread in the Indo-European tradition area, with frequent overlap with other related tales, such as Types 400, 550 and 313, and with aspects of Arthurian material itself.¹² Their principal features can be outlined as follows:

The Bear's Son (AT 301)

hero, often youngest son, has unusual conception (by animal, supernatural father, or the like)

he is endowed with amazing strength

he guards royal orchard against predator

he is sent to retrieve kidnapped royal princess

John the Bear (AT 650)

hero, often youngest son, has unusual conception (by animal, supernatural father, or the like)

he is endowed with amazing strength

he performs agricultural tasks: digging, flailing, tree-pulling etc.

continued

The Bear's Son (AT 301)

John the Bear (AT 650)

he beats off a strange predator at a meal (dwarf, giant, monster)

he reaches another world (by well, by ship, by bridge), where princess is held

he kills monster kidnapper, frees princess

but is betrayed by strong companions and left in other world

he returns with aid of magic helper (animals, magic bird, supernatural spirit-force)

he drives off opposition at the wedding and is able to retrieve princess, whom he marries

he is sent down a well to be killed by monster millstone, or sent to the Otherworld to get objects from devils

thus being betrayed by his master

he returns complete with devils

he sends his master to kingdom-come with a blow

Much of this ensemble is also clearly established as ancient: the essential outline of Type 301 is acknowledged to embody the tale of Trita Aptya in the *Rig Veda*, and his counterpart Thrita or Thraetaona Athwiya in the *Avesta*. Between the two they supply the hero's identity as a youngest brother, his abandonment underground, his victory over dragons/demons there, and his recovery of captives.¹³ The similarity of the Avestan form Athwiya to Arcturus/Arthur should not escape notice either.

It can be seen clearly enough from the comparative synopsis that the points where the two types coincide offer different representations or ways of looking at much the same motif, and 'mixed' versions of the types are unsurprisingly quite frequent.¹⁴ The main difference in content is that one of the tales contains the ambiguous escorts and the retrieval of the princess, while the other does not. We must now determine whether or not Arkas/Arktouros himself relates to either or both of these types, or whether his conception as a bear's son (unusually on his mother's rather than his father's side) is pure coincidence. First we should notice that the second half of the story in its most distinctive form quite clearly occurs in classical antiquity, though not attached specifically to Arkas or Arktouros:¹⁵ this is where the escape from the world below is effected by means of riding on a carnivorous bird, which requires some of the hero's own flesh in order to summon the strength to reach the upper world:

Two shepherds from Ephesus find a beehive in a hole in the ground. One is let down in a basket by the other and finds a treasure as well as the hive. He sends up the treasure, but puts a stone in the basket instead of himself, only to find that his treacherous companion lets the rope go, and so intends to kill him. At the bottom of the shaft he has a dream sent by Apollo. He is to wound himself with a stone, and a vulture comes and takes him to the top of the shaft. He appears before the authorities to convict his betrayer, who has given a false account of how he met his death.

This is an entirely 'natural' and, I suppose, actually just possible tale; but its description of the basket trick is exactly reproduced in a variety of modern versions, along with a suggestion of the motif of the hero's 'giving a part of his body' to the bird, which emerges especially in Eastern versions as the likeliest option for the motif of return. The first part of Aristophanes' *Peace* offers a further illustration: a farmer Trygaeus ('Harvester') goes on a journey to heaven to rescue the three girls Peace, Harvest and Spectacle (Theoria) from their underground prison by enlisting the help of other farmers, and then has to fight off those who try to deny him Peace.¹⁶ The tale in Conon (or the surviving part of it) has to be as old as a writer of the Augustan era at least; Aristophanes' version is five centuries earlier. In fact it has been clear since Panzer that much of the tale-type is older: references to Trita Aptya in the *Rig Veda* and to Athwiya and his son Thraetaona in the Zoroastrian Yashts allow little room for doubt that most of the story can be found in two of our earliest mythological strata, and that parts of it are echoed in the historicised *Shah Nama* of Firdausi, the legendary chronicle of Persian kings, in the medieval period itself.¹⁷ We should now determine how much can be attributed to stories surrounding Arkas himself. This information serves to underline that modern oral analogues cannot be ignored on the spurious ground that we do not know when the folktale began to circulate; this particular tale plainly must have been in circulation already at some point in the Ancient World, where indeed it was already geographically widespread.

It is useful at this point to show how standard forms of related tales such as Type 400 and Type 550 relate to the standard 'Bear's Son' template:

<i>The Bear's Son/ John the Bear</i> (Types 301/650)	<i>Search for the Lost Wife</i> (Type 400) (e.g. Grimm 193)	<i>Search for the Golden Bird</i> (Type 550) (e.g. Grimm 57)
The hero, of extraordinary parentage	The hero	The hero
	has beautiful wife, accused of unfaithfulness	

continued

ARKTOUROS II

*The Bear's Son/
John the Bear*
(Types 301/650)

Search for the lost Wife
(Type 400)
(e.g. Grimm 193)

*Search for the Golden
Bird* (Type 550)
(e.g. Grimm 57)

task helpers,
e.g. mountain-chopper

tasks: empty pond, chop
down forest

task helper: fox who
can remove mountain

pursues a thief who
steals from orchard
(standard alternative
opening)

pursues wife to
Otherworld

pursues a golden bird
who steals from
orchard

companions waylaid at
hall

companions waylaid
at forbidden
hostelry

pursuit to other world

pursuit of princess to
other world

pursuit to golden bird's
castle

rescues beautiful girls

rescues beautiful
princess, agrees to be
faithful

must find golden horse,
golden princess

hero left down well by
companions; rescued by
bird or animal

hero thrown down well
by rescued brothers;
recovered by fox

rescues golden bird at
request of
Otherworldly princess

companions take girl,
leave hero

other wife attempts to
steal her

companions take girl,
leave hero

he returns, marries girl,
punishes thieves

he remembers lost love

he returns, gains
princess by giving her
golden bird, punishes
thieves

fox protector killed at
own request – is bride's
enchanted brother

It will be seen that all three tales really share the same basic stem, and normally tend to differ most obviously in the manner of their introductions. The girl in Type 550 is usually an Otherworldly bride in some sense: either she has an Otherworldly father, or a previous Otherworldly husband who reclaims her, or the like. She either *is*, or possesses, or is in some way associated with, a golden bird, and goes to the Otherworld and comes back, in circumstances associated with the breaking of a taboo. We should also note an association between Type 400, the 'Lost Wife' tale, in turn, with Type 590, where a supernaturally strong hero has a problem with a hostile mother or sister, resulting in his relative's death and his protection by helpful animals, sometimes in turn entailing the striking motif of his dismemberment and reassembly.

We should now note how our materials on Arkas relate to this distribution of tale-motifs, uniting stories about bear parentage, rescuing an Otherworldly woman, threatening a parent, and being dismembered and reassembled:

<i>Bear's Son</i> Type 301 (cf. 650)	<i>Lost Wife</i> (Type 400)	<i>Golden Bird</i> (Type 550)	<i>Blue Band</i> (Type 590)
Arkas <i>is</i> Bear's son	Arkas	Arkas	Arkas
has supernatural conception			has supernatural conception
has amazing weapon			finds amazing weapon
has adventure at forbidden precinct		meets 'golden dove'	has adventure at forbidden precinct
rescues Otherworldly woman	rescues Otherworldly woman (nymph)	rescues Otherworldly woman (nymph)	rescues Otherworldly woman
and they make love	and they make love		
	{he agrees to be faithful} {breaks taboo}		

continued

<i>Bear's Son</i> Type 301 (cf. 650)	<i>Lost Wife</i> (Type 400)	<i>Golden Bird</i> (Type 550)	<i>Blue Band</i> (Type 590)
she is taken away	[she injures him]	hero is cut up by treacherous family	hero is cut up by treacherous family
he recovers her from Otherworld ¹⁸			recovers and returns to princess? is about to kill mother taken up to stars

It can be seen from this table that the various apparently unrelated parts of the Arkas story belong to these four interrelated and interlocking folktale types, essential parts of which were extant as early as the Hellenistic world and probably a great deal earlier. Different tale-types among the broader grouping simply focus on different parts of a larger hero-tale, depending on whether they focus on the hero's relationship with his mother, with fellow adventurers, or with a wife or future wife.

Arthurian and other versions

This kind of template will account for a great deal of the material of Arthurian saga, either directly applied to King Arthur himself, or transferred to one or other of his most illustrious companions, such as Gawain or Percival. It also helpfully covers characteristic adventures of the ancient Athenian hero Theseus, such as the killing of the Minotaur and the sojourn with Pirithous in the Underworld, which are less easily paralleled, or at least felt to be much less characteristic, of Arthurian romance.¹⁹ Only the tragic ending of the king's death tends to be elided in the traditionally happily ending modern folk versions.

We can test the 'Bear's Son' against Arthurian Romance in turn from the following three examples: Chrétien de Troyes' Romance *Lancelot* (twelfth-century French); the *Ballad of Burd Ellen*, an English folk ballad known to Sir Walter Scott; and the account of the abduction of Elena in Geoffrey of Monmouth:

<i>Lancelot</i> (Chrétien)	<i>Child Rowland</i> (Briggs A.1.180ff.)	<i>Geoffrey of Monmouth</i> (HRB 10.3)
Arthur's wife abducted	Arthur's daughter Burd Ellen abducted	Helena, Duke Hovel's daughter abducted

ARKTOUROS II

three knights go in pursuit	three sons go off in pursuit	Arthur and two knights go in pursuit
two are defeated in wood	two are captured	two are forbidden by Arthur to take part
unknown third knight goes as villein to Otherworldly kingdom reached by swordbridge or bridge under water	youngest goes to find the King of Elfland, pursues him underground through tunnel in hill	Arthur goes to find the Giant of St.-Michelle, and finds him on his mountain
hero kept in Otherworld	Child Rowland held in underground prison	Helena held prisoner on mountain
while companion comes back with lost queen		
displaced by hero returning to claim to be queen's rescuer	Child Rowland rescues Burd Ellen	Arthur retrieves the body of Helena
	King of Elfland defeated but spared by Child Rowland	Giant of St.-Michelle killed by Arthur

We must allow for the modification to chronicle history, however unreliable, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's hands; he cannot allow the folktale ending where Bedivere and Gawain would have to leave Arthur trapped in the mountain while they escape; and he can have an unhappy ending when the heroine dies to escape dishonour, to emphasise Arthur's own profile of the just king against the unspeakably evil monster.

If we apply this scheme to the Arktouros story in general it fits very comfortably, as does much of Arthurian Romance, as follows:

<i>Bear's Son</i>	<i>Arktouros-texts</i>	<i>Medieval Arthurian tradition</i>
The hero is the son of a bear	The hero is the son of a bear	The hero has name 'Bear-warden'
he has supernatural strength test	[is strong enough to hold up swollen river, etc.]	he has supernatural strength test

continued

<i>Bear's Son</i>	<i>Arktouros-texts</i>	<i>Medieval Arthurian tradition</i>
he acquires weapon (club, sword)	he acquires weapon (club)	he acquires weapon (sword)
he acquires amazingly endowed friends (e.g. Pine-Bender, Mountain-Chopper)	encounters Triptolemus and '(A)dristas?'	he acquires amazingly endowed companions (Kay can endure extremes of temperature, etc.)
they encounter giant, dwarf, monster in deserted hall	encounters bear in forbidden precinct	they encounter giant, dwarf, monster in deserted hall
they hunt giant, dwarf in mysterious place	(hunts in mysterious place)	they hunt giant, dwarf in mysterious place
hero distinguished in combat		hero distinguished in combat
rescues princess and treasure underground or at sea	rescues Nymph Chrysopeleia ('Golden-Dove') trapped in tree on river-bank	rescues princess and treasure underground or at sea
betrayed by his fellows		betrayed by his fellows
gets back, sometimes by supernatural flight	goes to heaven by means of whirlwind	gets back, goes to Otherworld by boat

Here our evidence on Arkas only contributes a skeleton to the tale (and may indeed actually hint at missing portions), but when we add in further details of all three figures we can satisfy ourselves that the profiles continue to match:

<i>Arkas/Arktouros</i>	<i>King Arthur</i>	<i>Bear's Son/John the Bear</i>
Son of Zeus and Bear	Son of 'dragon-head' born of suppositious birth	Son of Bear?
brought up by Hermes and Maia	brought up by foster-figures	
	has amazing weapon	has amazing weapon

meets Triptolemus and is trained in mysteries of Demeter	sees portent of two dragons in sky	
cultivates domestic fruits, loves apples (as Philo-melus)		protects magic fruits in father's orchard
cultivates grain	has amazing reaper	is amazing reaper, produces huge haul of grain
	kills Giant who abducted girl	kills Giant who abducted girl
is taught spinning by 'Adristas?'		
	attempts to kill followers by means of magic revolving castle	attempts to kill by means of mill-wheels
comes to forbidden precinct temple of father, Zeus Lycaeus	king or followers come to forbidden precinct	comes to forbidden precinct
meets long-lost mother	meets long-lost mother	comes to robber's den
prepares to kill mother, Kallisto (she-bear)	has dream of being about to kill bear	kills mother and mother's wicked lover
wolf grandfather or uncles prepare to sacrifice him, and cut up his flesh, which is divinely restored	hears stories from ancient man who confesses to being a werewolf	fight off wolves
drives back swollen river and rescues drowning tree nymph Golden-Dove		
sleeps with nymph Golden-Dove		
is blown up to the sky by a typhoon	is raised by spirits	

One way or another it is clear enough that agricultural process is a major part in this culture-hero story, and it may well be that the mysteries of Demeter with the attendant myth of the descent and recovery of Persephone are what lies behind the story of the kidnapped and rescued princess, at least in an Arcadian context. As it happens we have a very good example of this in the parallel hero-tale of Theseus, an Arthur-figure in all but name as we shall see, who quite clearly does go down to the Underworld to capture Persephone.²⁰ The etymology of the various forms of Persephone (including Pherrephatta, Persephatta and Phersephone) is not entirely clear: but the *-phatta* suffix indicates a dove, and *LSJ* Perse-II relates to the perseae-tree, an evergreen tree with a green pear or plum-like fruit. Whatever the real or ultimate origin, which might be the adaptation of a foreign word, it could be legitimately understood as some kind of dove to correspond to Arkas' rescued girl Chrysopeleia, 'Golden-Dove'. The folktale pattern and the Theseus analogue strongly suggest that this is correct, as does the whole religious background of early Arcadia, where the cults of Demeter, Despoina and Kore are particularly prominent, and we should expect a pupil of Demeter's agent Triptolemus to support them.²¹

It is worthwhile to note a version of the 'Bear's Son' tale actually told in 1860 by an Albanian priest to Lenormant (Lawson (1910), 80–84):

Saint Demetra's beautiful daughter is kidnapped by a Turkish Lord from Souli and taken to the mountains of Epirus, with underworld associations, on a black horse. Her distraught mother, after asking tree, sun, moon and stars, finds out about her kidnap from a stork. Both went to Lepsina (Eleusis), and the khodja-bachi Nicholas' son offered to recover the daughter in return for her marriage. He found forty dragons round a cauldron, which he lifts with one hand. They get him to take them to the tower where a magician is holding the girl. He finds the girl's window and executes the dragons as they come in at it. After a competition of metamorphoses with the magician he is cut in four pieces, while the magician rapes the girl. But the stork revitalises the hero with a magic herb. He prays for help to the Panhagia, vowing to become a monk. The stork blinds and kills the magician by removing a white hair. The girl is restored to Lepsina, as spring returns; the fields there are now always fertile (but the hero now gives up his claim to the girl and joins the monastery).

As Lawson recognised, this is a very obvious transformation of the 'Bear's Son' tale into Christian hagiography. The monastic aspect may well stem from the informant, and is uncharacteristic of the tale as a whole, though it fits the absence of male suitor for Persephone in Greek myth other than Pluto himself. And it connects the story of 'the princess underground' very clearly with Persephone and Triptolemus. It will be no surprise to find variants of the story

in which Arkas or his followers play the hero. It usefully combines the basic outlines of the ‘Otherworld rescue’ with an episode of dismemberment for the hero. That version is appropriate to Eleusis itself. In Arcadia we should expect the dismemberment of Arkas, and the transfer of the hero from Triptolemus to the latter’s own pupil, the local hero Arkas himself. We should also note that Persephone, queen of Faery, features in the Romance *Arthur of Little Britain*, where she is the girl who presents the hero with a sword,²² again a standard feature of the underground section of the ‘Bear’s Son’ tale.²³

Arkas/Arktouros and the ‘Tale of the Golden Bird’

As they stand the available traces of Arkas can be assembled to offer a first version of Aarne-Thompson Type 550, ‘The Golden Bird’, itself closely related to the ‘Bear’s Son’ tale as we have seen. Instead of chasing a monster to the Underworld for spoiling the king’s orchard, the hero pursues a golden bird that has done so, and marries her when she changes into a human. The specially interesting feature here is that the modern Russian version quoted contains a dismemberment scene which relates independently to the Arkas-story. The medieval Arthurian example offered here is the *Chevalier au Papegau*, a non-cyclic thirteenth-century prose tale, which seems to divide the identity of the king’s blonde mistress and the bird in the golden cage, won by Arthur in a separate adventure. The parrot sings love-songs and is in the custody of an ugly dwarf; we know that Arktouros’ conquest golden dove was a muse giving oracles of the arch-satyr creature Pan.

Hero Arkas

Hero Arthur

Hero Ivan
(Russian)²⁴

out hunting

finds golden dove-girl

wins parrot in golden cage

finds golden bird

sleeps with her

sleeps with blonde girl

[gray wolf helps with sequence of tasks: acquiring golden horse, radiant princess]

battles with the flood-waters that have undermined the girl’s tree

battles with water-creature that flattens trees

sleeps with her

sleeps with blonde girl threatened by creature

rests with radiant princess in garden under tree

continued

<i>Hero Arkas</i>	<i>Hero Arthur</i>	<i>Hero Ivan</i> (Russian)
uncles dismember him	escapes dismembering device	evil brothers cut him into little pieces
gods put him together again		gray wolf gives him water of life and puts him back together
marries golden dove-girl		marries princess
grandfather gray wolf (Lykaon) becomes human (?)		gray wolf becomes human

Here the modern folktale evidence is particularly important: an essential part of the structure of this tale is that the hero is helped by a helpful animal (a fox, a wolf). In the story of Arkas we have his grandfather Lykaon as a werewolf, sometimes guilty of his sacrifice and sometimes not; and in Pausanias the possible imputation that he himself regained his human shape, since (reformed) werewolves were said to do so after a period of years.²⁵ We have the possibility that a version existed where Lykaon as a wolf *saved* the dismembered Arkas (for example, by the application of a healing plant), and was rewarded by regaining his human form. Alternatively, the presiding deity of Mount Lykaeus, as Zeus Lykaeus, could as easily be characterised as a friendly wolf as he could as a god. This help from fox or wolf is also a common ending for the related Type 590, which we shall consider below.

We have a good Indian variant of the golden bird story:²⁶ the prince's favourite wife is slandered by rival wives, and goes off; he has to retrieve her from a magic tree in the forest set in a boiling, overflowing spring, just as Arkas has to rescue Chrysopeleia, simultaneously bird and tree.

The Arthurian version of both Types 301 and 550 is the central theme of several romances, most notably one dealing with the abduction of Guinevere. The treacherous Melwas, perhaps an anticipation of Mordred, takes her to some kind of Otherworld. Arthur returns to reclaim her, or Lancelot goes to the Otherworld of Melwas' glass kingdom reached under water or through a knifebridge, and finds her.²⁷

How far, then, is it possible to see the ancient materials on Arkas/Arktouros as parts of a single coherent narrative ensemble? We could say that by far the most distinctive trait of the Arkas-material is his intent to kill his mother the bear. The strong task-undertaking hero likely to kill his mother at a forbidden precinct corresponds best to Aarne-Thompson Type 590 ('the blue band').

A clumsy Hungarian composite version of this (with elements of a number of convergent types) comes out as follows:

<i>Arkas-Texts</i>	<i>Degh no. 8²⁸</i> (selected features)	<i>Yvain</i>
hero with supernatural father, animal mother, sometimes fathered by Apollo, and found among stars	hero with supernatural father (son of Sun, brother-in-law of stars)	hero Yvain, son of half-sister hostile to Arthur (and by implication with hostile mother)
possesses kalaurops	finds magic belt, uproots treetrunk	
goes to forbidden precinct in forest		goes to forbidden precinct in forest
is about to kill mother	has mother who turns enemy	is son of mother hostile to Arthur
taken up in whirlwind with bear	taken up in whirlwind with bear, lion and wolf to visit the stars comes back to earth	caught up in magic rainstorm in forest
rescues golden dove-girl from water-storm		kills the guardian of the magic storm and marries his wife
she sleeps with him [<i>only in analogue</i> : in return for promise (to be faithful)]		she marries him in return for promise (to return within year)
[he breaks promise]		he breaks promise
saves girl from prostitution in water-storm		saves girl from prostitution
suffers dismemberment but is reassembled	suffers dismemberment but is reassembled	goes mad but is cured
prepares to kill mother who has plotted against him	kills mother who has plotted against him with brigand	

The Hungarian tale is far from an ideal version: much of it embodies 'Bear's Son' elements closest to those embodied in the ancient legend of Perseus.²⁹ But it is close to what we know of Arkas, and at the same time is recognisable in large part (but not exclusively) as not only embodying the folktale Type 590, but as touching again and again on the outline of *Yvain*, the early Old French Romance by Chrétien de Troyes. In *Yvain*'s case the 'rival mother' is missing, and the hero goes mad instead of being literally dismembered, but as *Yvain* was traditionally child of Arthur's well-established enemy half-sister Morgan La Fée the right pattern of hostility between mother and son is already well established in the hero's genealogy itself. A point to note is that the modern folktales place the dismemberment episode late in the hero's career, rather than as a first adventure, as the Greek mythographers tend to make it. Overall the story combines the tales of treacherous mother, traditional forest quest, breaking of taboo to antagonise supernatural bride, and animal helpers of a strong man. The lion does not figure in the Arkas texts; but Arkas for his part is related to both bear and wolf.

Guinevere and Gunavara

It should be noted that one other Arthurian figure can be connected to the transmission of the 'Bear's Son' tale. Often the story is told with the hero not as King Arthur himself, but as the youngest of his sons, as we have seen in the case of Child Roland. Panzer reported an Indian 'Bear's Son' version in Somadeva's tenth-century *Katha Sarit Sagara* where the hero-child's mother is given as Gunavara.³⁰ (Arthur's name, and those of the other characters, are not recognisable in this instance.) This cannot have come from the Latin West or Geoffrey of Monmouth, in view of the date of the *Katha Sarit Sagara*.³¹ Moreover, the context of Gunavara's role in the tale corresponds to a role for Guinevere which surfaces from time to time in the Western tradition. She is slandered by the king's other wives as unfaithful, but is vindicated eventually when a rival wife confesses. We have just seen the same situation prefaced directly to the Indian version of the Chrysopeleia tale above. This situation occurs in several Arthurian tales where the true Guinevere is confronted by a false Guinevere who falsely claims prior marital ties with the King.³² Interestingly, the animal element in Gunavara's child comes not from association with a bear, but because his mother has used the fleshy part of a goat's horns, recommended as a fertility treatment.³³ We are reminded that the Arkas tradition credits the prince with having the half-goat god Pan as a brother.³⁴

The role of Pan throughout such stories seems elusive and ambiguous. But he would work well in the role of the Bear's Son's evil companion or evil brother, who one moment helps the hero and the next tries to claim his wife. This is well represented in the Irish story of Mitac and King Airem (*The Wooing of Etain*), and in its analogue in the legends of Theseus, as we shall see.³⁵

Lykaon and Gorlagon

One of the most bizarre of all Arthurian tales, that of *Arthur and Gorlagon*,³⁶ has the king listening to an old man instructing him about how the latter's own wife had changed him into a werewolf. Now some versions of the Arkas/Arktouros story have the prince at the court of his grandfather Lykaon, who was transformed into a wolf by Zeus because of a human sacrifice,³⁷ sometimes of Arkas, sometimes of some other. The motivation for the change is nothing to do with unfaithful wives here; but we do have an Arthur-figure in the company of an elderly wolf-man.³⁸ Moreover, we do happen to have a tradition preserved in which one of Arthur's immediate predecessors Vortigern contemplates the human sacrifice of Merlin, no less. We also have an early Welsh poem *Pa Gur* which seems to refer to a battle of Arthur with a Garlwyd ('Rough-gray'), the enemy at Trywruid, 'Nennius' Tribruit, and this too might denote a werewolf.³⁹

The Broceliande storm

We have noted time and again the motif that Arkas comes across the Otherworldly consort during a severe rainstorm, and that parallels of one sort or another accrue to this event. A detailed description of such a storm is given in *Yvain*, in the form of a knightly challenge: at the beginning of Chrétien's *Yvain* a returning knight describes a forest wonder in Broceliande:

You'll see the spring boiling, although it's colder than marble. It's in the shade of the loveliest tree that Nature ever managed to create. It keeps its leaves the whole year round and doesn't shed them however hard the winter; and there's an iron basin hanging on a chain long enough to reach the spring. Beside the spring you'll find a large slab such as you'll see: I can't tell you what it's made of, for I never saw another like it. And on the other side you'll find a chapel – small, but very pretty. If you'll take some water in the basin and spill it on the slab, you'll see such a tempest get up that no animal will stay in this wood, . . . for you'll see thunderbolts flying, such a wind blow and trees torn to pieces, such rain, thunder, and lightning that, if you can get free of it without a deal of bother and trouble, you'll be luckier than any other knight who ever came there.⁴⁰

It is worth noting that not only does Arkas himself rescue the supernatural consort under storm conditions, but that Pausanias notes a local rainmaking rite of just this sort in Arcadia itself:⁴¹

If a drought continues for a long time and the seeds in the ground and the trees are already withering, at that point the priest of Lykaian Zeus

prays to the water and performs whatever sacrifice is in accordance with holy law, dipping the branch of an oak onto the water's surface but not deep into the spring. When the water has been stirred, a vapour rises like a mist, and not far off the mist takes the form of a cloud, collects other clouds, and makes the rain come down on the Arcadians' land.

Once again materials related to Arkas/Arktouros and surviving local lore can be seen to converge.

We can begin, then, to take stock of the credentials of Arkas/Arktouros as an Arthurian candidate. For a start, this Arktouros was a king (of Arcadia in the Peloponnese), and so as relevant to this discussion as any *dux bellorum* of the Dark Ages. Although the title Arktouros is only conferred on him after his katasterism, his translation to a star in a constellation, he deserves *prima facie* consideration as the first king to bear the name Arthur at any stage in his career. His mother Callisto was seduced by no less than Zeus/Jupiter himself, in a deception, when he disguised himself as her patroness and friend the goddess Artemis: one thinks as ever of the seduction of Igerna by Uther Pendragon, though this time Callisto is unmarried and the impersonation is of a female companion rather than a mortal husband. In some accounts he is changed directly into a star when he meets his mother when out hunting, fails to recognise the animal as his mother, and is about to kill her; she too becomes a star (as Callisto, the Great Bear). One notes that, at least in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Arthur has a *dream*, that he kills a bear, prefiguring in this case the Emperor Lucius of Rome.⁴² And in Geoffrey of Monmouth Uther Pendragon sees star signs in the sky interpreted by Merlin as prefiguring himself and Arthur.⁴³ Geoffrey's narrative has these appear before the accession of Uther, rather than after the life of Arktorus; but they still point to the stellar status of their respective rulers.⁴⁴ We should also expect that in encountering Triptolemus Arkas/Arktouros will have been confronted by the conventional form of this figure, a bearded or unbearded man driving a chariot drawn by two dragons across the skies.⁴⁵

The point here is that Arkas is a king of the Pelasgians, a primitive and supposedly autochthonous people located originally in the central Peloponnese, but also *inter alia* in Thessaly in Northeastern Greece.⁴⁶ We find Arktouros (as Arkas) as a purveyor of the useful arts of civilisation, and as the name-figure for Arcadia. On both counts he is already established as a national culture-hero, and here is a basis for his fame. Arthurian scholars often comment on being unable to account for what it was that made the traditional Dark Age British Arthur so potent a symbol. The Arcadian counterpart gives us some notion of why he should be regarded as quite such a wonderful Golden Age figure. We have also every reason to connect him to the cult of Demeter which, coupled with that of Despoina/Kore, was strong throughout Arcadia in historical times;⁴⁷ although we have no text directly connecting them, the 'Bear's Son'

episode and the story of Chrysopeleia invite us to conjecture some kind of underground rescue of Persephone ('dove-girl') by her mother's evident protégé (or even son) Arkas. There were celebrations of a double cult at a ravine near Trapezous known and recorded by Pausanias, in a region locally reputed to be the area where the gods themselves had fought the giants.⁴⁸ Arkas' own assumption into the sky puts him in the category of 'Wild Hunt' figures, further causing him to converge with the Arthur who survives to ride again as wild hunter.⁴⁹ The hunter/guardian of the bear would also naturally give rise to royal hunt legends; he has not only hunted on earth, but still hunts in the night sky. He is also found in the legends of Lykaon, as Lykaon's daughter Callisto's son, and sometimes as his intended or actual human sacrifice, so that Arktouros himself has to be miraculously reconstituted by the gods; and his remains have to be taken from Mount Maenalus at a place where three roads meet, and re-interred to serve a hero-cult in Mantinea at a place called the Altars of the Sun, at the well-nigh inevitable behest of Delphi.⁵⁰ The most important feature here is less a matter of individual details than the fact that he is obviously among the most ancient generation of kings. But here we have a King Arthur in the most ancient stratum of Greek mythology; in fact Arktouros already has its astronomical function as a weather sign as early as Hesiod's *Works and Days*. We could scarcely ask for more. It is hard to dismiss a culture-hero king Arktouros (bear-guardian). Once the antiquity of this particular story is established, it underlines the legitimacy, indeed the obligation, to search for further Arthur-figures in the first millennium BC. And it stresses that the name has mythico-legendary associations in a context too remote for us to trace historically.

Parts of this mythical Arthur-figure do make sound sense. Not only is his close predecessor, whether Lykaon or his sons, contemplating human sacrifice, but Arkas himself is approached by Triptolemus (he of the dragon-drawn chariot) and shown how to sow crops. The two stories are complementary: Arktouros ushers into Arcadia an era in which eating people is wrong, and he can produce an alternative. (It has to be said that Arthur's agricultural reputation is negative, at least in some parts of the tradition: one thinks of the claim in the Welsh Triads that land he has laid waste remains so for seven years and not just a year!)⁵¹ But not all texts have quite this import: when he and his men pursue an amazing sow (again in the Triads) it escapes him and produces the wheat and the bee), whether because of or despite the king.⁵² And of course just as Arkas can evidently raise crops, so the Arthur of *Culhwch and Olwen* can produce a champion who can perform marvellous feats of sowing and reaping during the day.⁵³

We have no sword-in-the-stone test in the Arktouros story as transmitted (we do have a close counterpart of it attributed to Theseus, as we shall see⁵⁴); but we do have him entrusted in one tradition to Maia and Hermes rather than Lykaon to bring up after Artemis or Hera has killed his mother.⁵⁵ Hermes would act as a protector: he also knows something of music, having invented

the lyre, and as psychopompos he has strong chthonic connexions, which would be consonant with the descent into the Otherworld in 'Bear's Son' stories. He may have served here as a Merlin-figure in his own right. We know from a recently published Oxyrynchus papyrus that Arkas founded a cult of somebody: perhaps Hermes, given the gap in the papyrus.⁵⁶

King Arthur treads the boards, and makes his first speech

One entirely unexpected piece of literary history arises from this emergence of Arcturus. In the prologue of an early Roman comedy by Plautus (third–second century BC), *Rudens* ('The Rope'), the god Arcturus gives an address to the audience, setting the scene for a romantic melodrama off the coast of Cyrene in which the heroine Palaestra will be reunited with her lover Plesidippus, and removed from the clutches of the wicked pimp Labrax ('Sea-Bass', i.e. 'Voracious Fish'). Arcturus himself has sent the storm that separates the girl and the pimp, and so has intervened personally in the action. This – absurdly, we might feel – is in one sense the first Arthurian Romance in which the former King Arkas, now the star Arcturus, speaks and takes the credit for saving a damsel in distress – as he goes on to do from time to time in Arthurian Romance itself.⁵⁷

I am a citizen of the city of the celestials, of Him who sways all peoples seas and lands. So do I shine, as you see, with my gleaming star, as a constellation which always rises at its appointed time, here and in the heavens. My name is Arcturus.

By night I shine in the sky and among the gods, while I walk by day among men. But other constellations too come down from heaven to earth. And Jupiter, the ruler of gods and men, assigns us our various posts among the nations, so that we can find out the deeds and behaviour of men, their obedience and loyalty, and how each one of them prospers

Now I shall give you the outline – that is why I have come here. First of all, Diphilus wanted the name of this town to be Cyrene. On that farm and the house next to it beside the sea lives Daemones, an old man who came here in exile from Athens – not a bad man; nor is he an exile from his homeland because of any wrongdoing, but while he obliged others he got himself in a mess, and through his kindness lost his hard-won wealth. And he also lost his dear little daughter. She was kidnapped and bought by a wicked pimp, who has brought her here to Cyrene still a virgin. Now a young man, a fellow-Athenian, saw her coming home from her lyre-lesson and fell in love; he went to the pimp and arranged to buy the girl for himself with thirty minas, made a down payment and sealed the bargain with an oath. This pimp,

as you would expect, did not give a fig for a bargain or for the oath he swore to the young man. He had a guest, an old fellow from Agrigentum in Sicily, the kind who would sell his own city. This fellow starts to praise the girl's good looks, and those of his other darling girls as well. He starts persuading the pimp to come with him to Sicily: there he declares people have luxurious tastes, and he'll be able to make a fortune.

He convinced the pimp, who hired a ship without a word to anyone, and put aboard his property that night. He tells the young man who had bought the girl from him that he wants to pay Venus a vow – that's her temple there – and so invites the boy here to lunch. He then embarks and off he sails with his charming little ladies. Others break the bad news to the lad, that the pimp has gone off. He goes to the harbour, but the ship was already way out to sea.

When I saw the maiden being carried off, I brought her help and ruin to the pimp: I ordered a winter storm and made the ocean waves move. For I, Arcturus, am the fiercest of the constellations, raising tempests when I rise, and worse ones when I set.

The episode is quite clearly replicated in the modern folktale tradition of the 'Bear's Son': in Grimm 166 we have a 'Bear's Son'/'Strong John' story with the Otherworld adventure of the normal kind, before the hero is betrayed by the two figures who kidnap his bride on a ship, to take overseas; with the aid of spirits (i.e. winds) he is able to sink the ship:⁵⁸

(The hero Hans) looked up into the air and saw spirits there, who said that he was now their master, and they asked what his desire might be. At first Hans was completely dumbfounded, but then he said that they should carry him to the top. They obeyed immediately, and it seemed to him as if he were actually flying upward.

When he reached the top, there was nobody in sight. Fir-Twister and Rock-Chopper had left in a hurry and had taken the beautiful maiden with them. But Hans turned the ring, and the spirits came and told him that the two were at sea. Hans ran and ran without stopping until he came to the seashore. Far, far out on the sea he spied a little ship. His rage was great, and without thinking he plunged into the water with his staff that weighed one hundred pounds. It dragged him down into the depths so that he almost drowned. However, he turned the ring in the nick of time, and the spirits came instantly and carried him quick as lightning to the little ship. Then he swung his staff, giving his wicked companions the punishment they justly deserved and throwing them overboard into the sea.

Unsurprisingly, too, something akin to this form of the material turns up in Scottish Gaelic ballad culture attached to King Arthur: the king or Sir Bhalbha

(Gawain) rescues a girl from a castle in an island in the sea, but with the brothel-keeping abductor replaced by the more normal giant.⁵⁹

Colarusso's publication of a Nart Saga also offers a valuable template which overlaps not only with a great deal of the above, but with the tale of Arkas/Arktouros and the golden dove rescued from the water:

<i>Nart Tale</i>	<i>Bear's Son</i>	<i>Other Arthurian features</i>
two brothers guard orchard of golden fruits of fertility	three brothers guard orchard of royal fruits	
one brother wounds dove-girl who tries to steal the fruit	one brother pursues fruit-thief by following trail of blood	
he pursues trail of blood to edge of sea of Azov		
finds the dove-girl's family in ravine at bottom of sea	finds the wounded creature at bottom of well	travel by underground water-bridge to rescue girl
is looked after by Graal-style maidens		reception by Graal-style maidens
restores girl to life by means of phial of her blood	rescues girl from kidnap in nether world	rescues dove-girl from drowning
supported by second brother	betrayed by second and third brothers	
marries girl	marries girl	

Conclusion

It should be clear, then, from the relationships of Arthurian materials to the various legends of Arkas/Arktouros, and the resemblances of both to the tale of the 'Bear's Son' and its cognates, that they embody a single concept: of a culture-hero who has significant attributes of the medieval Arthur, including the name itself. The result is that Arthur himself should not, and indeed cannot, be regarded as either a distinctively British or medieval phenomenon. He is an international hero-type whose earliest identification with a form of the name Arthur just happens to be Greek.

One other set of co-ordinates can tell us at least something of such a hero's wider distribution: his connexion with the time of the great flood. Ovid makes the connexion quite explicit, that the wickedness of Lykaon triggered off the flood;⁶⁰ if he or his family tried to sacrifice Arkas, and this was the specific act of impiety that brought about the flood, then Arkas himself was a contemporary of it, and his feats, especially to do with inventing useful agricultural techniques, relate to the period just after the flood itself took place.

We can find a hint to confirm this mythological cameo in the fact that a widespread series of variations on the flood-myth seem to preserve adventures or attributes parallel to those of Arkas: in particular the encounter of a hero with a bird who changes into a girl,⁶¹ and who receives warning of the flood from a goat. One thinks of our isolated versions in the Greek context where Erato at least gives oracles of Pan. We should note that some Tamil flood-myths end the great flood by the casting of a spear into the flood-waters:⁶² the 'sword in the lake' may be linked to the Arthurian corpus not just as part of heroic warrior-culture practice, but as part of an ancient stratum of international flood-stories, where it has a strong talismanic effect. It will come as no surprise that Persian tradition at least emphasises the involvement of the hero in control of waters as well.⁶³

Having found a widespread mythological Arthur-figure, then, we can now look for any other versions of his survival in a very different literary layer of the Ancient World, this time as King Arduus, greatest of knights, with an intriguing forerunner Kamblet-, in Western Asia in historical times.

ARDUS, ‘GREATEST OF KNIGHTS’: A FIRST ARTUS-FIGURE

So far we have noted Arthurian material in the Ancient World directly attributable to the materials surrounding the name Arkas/Arktouros, with their epicentre in Arcadia. It is now time to look at a rather different series of texts which seem to be looking at the same migratory legends, but from a different angle, and located in another place. We can start with an arresting sentence of a minor Greek historian:

and [King Ardus] numbered the Lydian army (he was the greatest of knights (ἱππότης ὁ πλεῖστος)), and found, they say, thirty thousand men.

We should add, too, that a predecessor of Ardus was Kambles or Kamblites, just as Arthur has a predecessor Camalis in his rulership of Camelot. We ought at least to be curious. Who is this ‘Ardus, greatest of knights’, and what is he doing in Lydia? If we are tempted to ignore this text in isolation, our experience of Arktouros should warn us not to let any other possible Arthurs pass unnoticed either. But first we should once more deal briefly with issues concerning the name Arthur itself.

Arturus, Arturius, Artus

So far we have concerned ourselves with the conventional British forms Art(h)ur, Art(h)urus and Arcturus, with minor variation the forms of the name used in Geoffrey of Monmouth, medieval Latin sources in general and in Middle English.¹ But Old French sources from Chrétien onwards, and their German derivatives, generally prefer the form ‘Artus’. If this were simply a misunderstood abbreviation, occasioned by the loss of a cross-stroke, for example, we should expect it to compete with the usual form Arturus, and that only from time to time. But that is not the picture: as far as French scribes are concerned, this seems to be the actual name of the king, and it is in any case attested in forms like *Artusius* *before* its occurrence in an Arthurian context.²

The likely explanation is that insofar as the name relates to 'the bear' (Latin *arctus*, corresponding to the Greek *arktos*) it is represented by a simplified consonant combination as *artus*. At any rate the complex of evidence assembled by Tatlock in his discussion of names in Geoffrey of Monmouth shows the persistence of the short form, whatever its origins.³

Before discussing the claims of our Ardus, greatest of knights, to represent Artus, we should say something about the transmission of the material itself, which is complex but not particularly suspect. It belongs in four excerpts preserved by the Byzantine excerptor Constantinos Porphyrogenitus, attributed to the first-century BC universal historian Nicolaus of Damascus.⁴ The latter was a versatile and well-established figure, tutor to the children of Antony and Cleopatra, and long-time associate of Herod the Great. He had a background in Peripatetic philosophy, and played a part in the transmission of Aristotle. His *Universal History* was the largest of its kind in Antiquity (at 144 books); and for the early books 1–8 he seems to have relied on Ctesias and Xanthus for the East, Ephorus and Hellanicus for the West. The excerpts of Lydian history that concern Ardus and his successors are thought to derive at least in part from the Lydian historian Xanthus, a near-contemporary of Herodotus, but clearly independent of him on some of the material that concerns us. Xanthus is generally agreed to be Lydian, whether from Sardis (Suda), or uncertain (Strabo); Ephorus assigned him a place as having provided the point of departure for no less than Herodotus himself, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus endorse his reliability. His *Lydiaca* had four books, and by the time of Diogenes Laertius it had been sufficiently established to have had an epitomator, as well as several references in Nicolaus of Damascus himself, grounds for supposing that Xanthus was the source of much of his information.

From the limited fragments, we can disengage that the latter was able to include at least some legendary material. This includes, for example, the observation of Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia* 25.14):

Xanthus the author of the histories says in book 1 that the young of a draco was brought back to life by its parent with a herb he calls Balim, and that by means of this same herb Tylon, killed by a dragon, was restored to life.

There is also some court scandal:⁵

And so Xanthus in the second book of his histories says that Adramytus king of the Lydians was the first to castrate women and use them instead of male eunuchs (the Suda attributes the practice at least to Gyges, likewise citing the second book of Xanthus), so that he could use them ever young.

And there is mythological material relating to flood, drought and volcanic or other geographical catastrophe:⁶

And also Xanthus the Lydian says that in the reign of Artaxerxes there was a great *auchmos*, and that the rivers and lakes and wells failed and he himself saw far from the sea shell-shaped and comb-shaped stones and impressions of scallop-shells, and sea lakes in Armenia and Matiene and lower Phrygia, from which it is possible to infer that the plains were once sea.

... And they tell fanciful tales about the sufferings of Typhon there and the Arimi, and they call this the Burnt-up Region ... the appearance of the plains is ashen, and the mountainous rocks are black, as if from burning. And some guess that this has happened because of thunderbolts and lightning, and do not hesitate to tell tales about Typhon. And Xanthus mentioned the king of the region as Arimoun. It is not reasonable to say that all such a region has suffered in such a way, but rather on account of earth-born fires, and even now there are no springs.

It is clear enough from these excerpts of Xanthus preserved elsewhere that he was able to include mythological or paradoxographic materials in his history,⁷ but we do not know enough about him to level any charges of tendentious falsification of the kind brought in ancient and modern times against Herodotus himself. So far as we are able to judge, neither Nicolaus nor Xanthus stands convicted of freely inventing, and the latter is writing no more than some 200 years after the events he is describing. None of the above of course guarantees the truth of any given statement. Xanthus appears to offer conventional royal succession history of a routine but highly anecdotal kind, like Ctesias but without the accusations of falsification.

For the historical Lydians unfortunately there is little to go on before Herodotus, who deals in some detail with Gyges, but has little to say about the Heraclids that preceded his floruit in the early seventh century BC (c.680–645). Philological and archaeological evidence will only tell us that the Lydians' origins are Bronze Age Anatolian. The information offered by Herodotus gives us a Heraclid dynasty with a last ruler Kandaules (Lydian) or Myrsilis (Hittite).⁸ If the dynasty was originally Greek, it would have Lydianised by this time, on the strength of the names alone. We are left very much on our own. Here, then, is Nicolaus' account of Arduus I of Lydia, whose reign must belong to the eighth century BC:⁹

(S)adyattes the king of Lydia had two sons, Kadus and Arduus; to these he left his kingdom, and they reigned together in mutual amity, and were loved by the great mass of the Lydians. But somehow or other Kadus' wife, whose name was Dammonno, was seduced by a cousin of his, a handsome man by the name of Spermus, and with him she plotted her husband's death. She gave him poison but failed to kill him, making him ill instead. Under care from a doctor Kadus improved. She therefore wanted to kill the doctor, but did not give

him poison because of his expertise, but dug a pit in the house, which she concealed, then laid a couch on top and other things, and calling him to dine she sat him where the pit was. And when he went down, she cunningly covered the spot.

And after this Kadus too died. But with her paramour she first drove out his brother Arduus, after bribing many of the Lydians with money, then she lived with Spermus and made him king. But Arduus, suddenly fleeing with his wife and daughter, was so poor that he spent his life in Cume making carts, and later on running an inn. And they say that he welcomed those who stayed there and sent all of them away as his friends.

Spermus was not satisfied with having done all that, but he also sent to Cume some robber called Kerses with orders to kill Arduus. And Kerses undertook the mission on condition of marrying Spermus' daughter and a sum of a thousand staters. But when Kerses arrived at Cume he put up at Arduus' inn. And the host treated him as he did all the rest. Kerses was delighted with everything, especially the daughter of Arduus, who was serving; he fell in love with her at sight. And somehow he asked Arduus for her in marriage in exchange for causing him to prosper greatly. Arduus would not have given her away because the man was so disgusting; he was a proud man because of his noble lineage. But because of the promise he agreed to it. When this was agreed, Kerses told him the whole truth, that he had come at the behest of Spermus to kill Arduus in return for Spermus' daughter, but that he was now ready to bring Arduus the head of Spermus in return for the hand of his own daughter. And when he agreed, he told him to shave off his hair for a while, and having constructed a wooden head like that of Arduus, he attached Arduus' hair to it and went off to Lydia. When he arrived in Lydia and Spermus asked him about his mission he declared that all had been accomplished, having deposited the head beforehand in a small room. And when Spermus told him to show him the head he brought, he said it was not right to put it on show in front of so many witnesses, but asked him to accompany him to the room and see the head with only the two of them there. Spermus complied, and as Kerses pointed it out as it lay on the ground Spermus bent down to take a closer look. Meanwhile he struck him with a sword and killed him, and cutting off his head he rushed through the door and hurried towards Arduus. The Lydian on the doors waited some time for Spermus to arrive; but when he did not come out after a long interval, they saw the corpse lying on the ground without a head. Realising what had happened they were delighted. For Spermus was very wicked, and while he was king the land had been waste (αὔμησεν ἡ γῆ). Spermus died, then, after a reign of two years, but he is not recorded in the royal lists.

When Kerses was fleeing he arrived at an inn. And he stayed there, delighted at the deed, and fell to drinking and told the innkeeper everything and showed him Spermus' head. The innkeeper realised that as a result Ardus would become king, and after making Kerses drunk with a great deal of wine, he [cut off his head and] took Spermus' head as well and set out for Cume to where Ardus was. And he announced to Ardus, who was reflecting on the whole business, that he came with the greatest of good things. And Ardus replied: 'that Spermus is dead and Kerses not my son-in-law – for these would be the greatest boons to me.' Thyessus answered (for that was the innkeeper's name): 'But that is exactly what I bring'; and as he spoke he showed him the two heads. Ardus was delighted and asked him what he wanted in return. Thyessus replied: 'neither your daughter nor gold, but give me my inn to hold free of tribute when you become king.' And this he granted him. And Thyessus as time went by became rich from his inn, and from this he set up a market and a temple of Hermes, called the temple of Thyessus. The Lydians invited Ardus to be king, sending Heraclids among their messengers. And Ardus returned and reigned as the best of all monarchs after Akimius, and to the Lydians he was great and just. And Ardus numbered the Lydian army (he was the greatest of knights), and found, they say, thirty thousand men.

Here then we have a tale of an Ardus who was 'the greatest of knights', with not a great deal of context. The numbering of the army can be supported from Arthurian tradition: in the first continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval* Sir Kay refers to a retinue of thirty thousand,¹⁰ though other texts give different figures, including forty thousand. Another echo of a familiar name is thrown up by the beginning of Nicolaus' notice: Ardus, greatest of knights, had a brother Kadus; we note the conjunction in early Arthurian texts of Arthur and a Kai rendered as Cato or Caus in Latin, and a close associate of the Round Table as Sir Cadoc,¹¹ who appears to be independent of Kai, but does occur as a co-ruler with Arthur himself. Kerses here does actually occur in an Arthurian context as Cerses/Serses in the Vulgate Lancelot, where he is Arthur's enemy and a servant of King Claudas.¹² We shall note too in due course that the Meles who succeeds Ardus, greatest of knights, would correspond to the hostile Maelwas of Arthurian texts.¹³

The first incidents portrayed in the fragment, however, present an incident apparently not known to Arthurian tradition in quite the form offered here, though not untypical in some respects of the general character of at least some Arthurian romance. Kadus' doctor is made to sit in a *kline* that will give way, causing him to fall into a pit beneath: this has been devised by his wife Dammonno, for his destruction. In the Gerbert continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval* a similar fate befalls knights who sit on the 'perilous seat': the floor gives way and they fall into an underground pit. The chair in that text is

said to have been given to Arthur's court by the fairy of Roche Menor with treacherous intent: six knights have already come to grief through it, followed in the instance being narrated by Perceval himself.¹⁴ Who is the doctor? If this is a story about Arthur, a healing courtier would almost certainly be Merlin. And what fate do we find for Merlin in Arthurian tradition? Specifically, we are told that he is entombed alive through the wiles of a sorceress. That is not exactly similar to the story here; but it might well be seen as a rather different view of the same story. Again, I know of no poisoning of Kay; but that of Arthur is certainly attempted by supernatural forces, as in the episode of Bertilai and the false Guinevere. It is certainly not unique to have an anecdote where Arthur is down on his luck, or totally humiliated; the opening of *Perlesvaus* has Arthur in hiding in a chapel in a forest in difficult straits;¹⁵ or in the Prose Tristan he is one moment lost in a forest, or even himself about to be beheaded by a woman.¹⁶ To make carts or to run a hostelry as he is doing here would be considerably less honourable than either of these, but certainly no less dishonourable than the clerical anti-Arthurian tales in British Saints' Lives which portray Arthur as a greedy plunderer, a would-be rapist or a dishonest manipulator of oaths.¹⁷ Here we have to do with a succession of two beheadings, where a disreputable double agent killing Ardu's rival in return for his daughter is himself killed by a tavern-owner, rewarded with life tenure of his inn. The nearest I can think of to this juxtaposition of themes is the case of Arthur and Accolon in Malory: the assassin Accolon is prepared to kill Arthur in return for the sexual favours of his treacherous sister Morgan;¹⁸ in the same episode Arthur confirms the tenure of a tenant against his unjust brother Sir Damas. But the episodes do not fit anything like exactly: Accolon is not killed by the tenant, nor does he kill any enemy instead of Arthur. Again, we occasionally have presentation of two heads to the king: one thinks again of the beginning of *Perlesvaus*, where a knight carrying a head is himself set upon and beheaded in front of Arthur.¹⁹ There is also a double-beheading accomplished in an Arthurian context by Jack the Giant Killer.²⁰ But beheadings are so commonplace in Arthurian texts – one thinks of the beheading games for a start – that we should probably not try to press resemblances too far. The name Thyessus might be read as Thiasos 'revel' in Greek, and so might point to one of several possibilities. The first 'Arthurian' adventure to correspond would be that at the end of Chrétien's *Erec*, where the defeat of Mabonagrain brings about the change from the latter's place of beheading to the *Joie de la Cort*; or we might see in Thiasos a reference to Lancelot's base at the castle of the Joyeuse Garde. Now Lancelot was responsible for the death of Gawain's brother Guerres/Gaheres,²¹ who might provide us with Kerses. But we need far more evidence before we could hope to clinch the identification.²² Cerses does occur as an alternative spelling of Serses (Xerxes), a henchman of Arthur's enemy King Claudas.²³

Whatever is going on, we seem to be looking at a much more homely Arthur, like the homely Gauanes of Herodotus, or like the homely Arthur of

early British tradition, trying to steal a pig from Tristan and unable to!²⁴ And we should note particularly that this Arthur-figure makes carts and runs a tavern: we should be able to recall Hyginus' tradition (*Fabula* 130), about Icarus-Arcturus, who puts wine on a cart and moves through Attica with it. There is as it happens a recognisable analogue to the main story of the cart-maker turned king in Aristotle's *Constitution of the Cumaeans*.²⁵

The Lydians, suffering under some tyrant, and seeing that there was a [suitable] man in Kume, sent an invitation to him to become king. This man happened to be a slave in a cart-maker's shop. And so the Lydians paid to have him manumitted and were trying to take him. And one of the Kumaeans who had made over a cart to him would not allow the deal; and when a great number tried to persuade him not to obstruct the process, he would not allow it, bitterly adding that he set great store on possessing a cart made by the king of the Lydians.

This adds little to Nicolaus' narrative, apart from the implication that Arduus (here unnamed) was not operating independently: it may be that acting as a slave was the best opportunity for cover. There is no awareness in the story that the subject had previously been king, or indeed his name and status, let alone the business of the inn; but no doubt the anecdote has been compressed to emphasise the *bon mot* that provides the punch-line. But the subject of this story, whatever the details, is as different from other traditions as the Arthur of 'Nennius', say, is different from the Arthur of the Saints' Lives; but this Arduus is none the worse for that, and should not be dismissed as an unrelated figure.

From Camalis to Kambles, Camalat to Kamblet-

Nicolaus and Xanthus yield us two other testimonies, about an intriguing predecessor of Arduus. He goes under the name Kambles or Kamblitas. The latter form has been doubted, but either yields a t-stem to give us a form Kamblet-.²⁶ Whatever the actual relationship of this figure to Arduus, be he Heraclid, native Lydian, or pre-Lydian Maeonian, Arduus, greatest of knights, also has a Kamblet- somewhere in his regnal background. Now the Post-Vulgate Queste gives us the invaluable indication of a Camalis among the early kings of Camalat,²⁷ so that the author clearly believes the name represented a person as well as a place. This means that Arduus has a forerunner Kambles, just as Artus himself has a forerunner Kamalis, so that we can say that both Artus and Arduus 'ruled over the country of Kambles/Kamalis' at the very least. Once we add the title 'greatest of knights' to such a designation we have a very serious contender for Arthurian identity indeed.

Since, however, Arduus was a Heraclid and so a 'scion of Heracles', we should ask if Kambles had any characteristics of Heracles, so as to be the king with

whom Arduš might most want to be associated. In fact he has (both are maddened wife-murdering gluttons and drunkards, and associates of Iardanus), and Kambles can be seen as a simplification of Kandaules, Heracles' Lydian title. With such an identity, then, the Arduš scion of Heracles could be directly styled Arduš 'of Kambleš'.

What, then, can we make of all this? Faced with appropriate legendary associations for the Arcadian Arkas-Arktouros, or the name Gauanes in Herodotus, discussed in the next chapter, it seems difficult to avoid at least the obligation to advance such an identification for discussion: Arduš of the country of Kambles/Kambleš-, greatest of knights, should also be able to claim to be Artus of the country of Camalis/Camalat, likewise greatest of knights. Whether or not we accept these equations outright, or merely regard them as interesting new candidates for consideration, they strengthen the Littleton-Malcor case for an early Eastern Arthur very considerably, and like the Arcadian material, they warn of the dangers of confining such a figure to a Scythian culture-area;²⁸ and they make it very difficult to be nearly so confident about an exclusively late or exclusively British Arthur in the future. What is more, they provide any later candidates with a scintillating mythico-legendary identity readymade.

Nor indeed is Arduš of Lydia's adventure to be viewed in isolation; where there is a potential Arthur-figure we should at least look for a Gawain as well, if not by name, at least in his actions; and this we are now in a position to do.

SOME ANCIENT GAWAIN- FIGURES, AND AN ELUSIVE LANCELOT

So far we have looked only at what can be seen of Arktouros/Arkas in Antiquity, then in turn at Arduš/Artus, 'greatest of knights' and at least associate in some sense of Kamblet-. We should now note that the chances of finding other associates of King Arthur, in some sort of association with the king himself, are greatly increased. We should now examine other key figures, for which the evidence is likely to be more fugitive. The central character in much Arthurian material is not Tristan, or Lancelot, or indeed Arthur himself, but Gawain. For Gawain as for Arthur, we have nothing in Antiquity that we could call a complete long work, but once more we have brief accounts that centre on a figure with significant characteristics of the Gawain-legend.

Gyges

Our first candidate relates to the Arduš of Lydia discussed in the previous chapter. Here our centre is once more in Lydia, and significantly soon after the so apparently memorable reign of Arduš himself; once more Nicolaus is our principal guide. We must examine the considerable penumbra of legend surrounding Gyges, an only slightly later seventh-century King of Lydia.¹ As it happens, he was the great-nephew and adopted son of an unconnected Arduš, but the homonym would obviously have invited confusion and connexion with *the* Arduš. Of the historical Gyges we can attest both the phenomenal wealth, and two important connexions to the East: Gyges dispatched an embassy to Ashurbanipal at Nineveh between 668 and 665 BC: the object was to seek help in the context of a threat of invasion by the Cimmerians, a barbarian people broadly classified with the Scythians. A later embassy from Gyges sent captive two Cimmerian chieftains along with gifts for the king, presumably as a thank-offering for services received. Later still the Assyrian king is found cursing him for disloyal support of the latter's enemy, the Egyptian Psammetichus (Tushamilli-Pishamilli), and eventually Gyges himself succumbs to Cimmerian pressure, perhaps around 645 BC. Gyges was also able to pursue an aggressive line against Magnesia (Nicolaus *FGrH*

90.F60), and Limetus, Smyrna and Colophon (Herodotus, Pausanias), but this is coupled with gifts to Delphi for supporting his coup against the Heraclids.² It may be possible to detect a Mysian dimension in Gyges' background, through his father Dascylus and Dascylum, reflected further in his allowing the Milesians to found Abydos. Protocorinthian Greek wares occur in both Lydia and Phrygia in the period corresponding to the reign of Gyges, and these may imply some degree of accommodation between the two kingdoms, though we do not even know the names of the successors of the Phrygian Midas.³ In the Greek world in general Gyges was proverbial for his wealth. We have attestation of this in the *Gigadas* (Herodotus 1.14) sent to Delphi, which considerably outshines the inventory of Midas at Gordium, or the display of Phrygian furniture at Delphi. Gyges not only had access to Lydian gold from the Pactolus, but also to Anatolian silver-mines.

Gyges, Gugu, Walwe: the problem of the tomb

Gyges was no less proverbial for his tomb. It has been controversially identified with a mound-burial in the royal burial mounds at Bin Tepe, partly excavated by Hanfmann. The central mound of the three in the Cemetery of a Thousand was identified as the tomb of Gyges on two grounds: that a poem of Hipponax refers to it in terms which amount to identification; and that a monogram motif on the foundation of the tomb itself spells the name Gugu, the Akkadian form of Gyges' name.⁴ C. Ratté has recently cast doubt on both counts:⁵ the text of Hipponax⁶ is corrupt at a critical point; and we cannot be absolutely sure that Gyges' tomb can be tied to the position of the Bin Tepe mounds, so that it might be in some still unidentified location. This uncertainty is difficult to challenge in the context of Hipponax' poem itself, but it is of no great moment if the Gugu monogram is itself securely deciphered. Here Ratté points to an alternative reading of the monogram, proposed by Wallace in 1988: WALWE, 'lion' on the basis of coin inscriptions.⁷ The ambiguity here might seem to disqualify the material as relevant evidence of any sort for Gyges let alone anything else: it remains a possibility that Hipponax' poem does refer to the Bin Tepe mounds, and that Gugu really does mean Gyges, but no more than that. But the alternative reading Walwe certainly adds to the problems in an interesting and challenging way. One of the many alternative versions of the name of Gawain in medieval texts is the spelling Walwayne or Walwannus, as in the title of the short Latin poem *de ortu Walwanni* ('On the rise of Gawain'). The closeness of this to Walwe may be attributed to extraordinary coincidence; or it may suggest that right from the time of the burial of Gyges himself alternative readings of the monogram account for some of the variety with which this resilient figure was named.

With this possibility in mind, we can actually link the name of Gyges with Arthurian material surprisingly quickly and clearly by a totally different route. If we look at the popular English Arthurian materials still surviving in

chapbook form, we find that Jack the Giant Killer helps King Arthur's son in an adventure where the latter gains something to make him invisible from a giant underground, and obtains the love (and property) of a lady, by murdering her current lover with the help of a magic instrument. This chain of motifs, though widespread, is also distinctive, at least in the matter of obtaining the magic token from a giant underground. We note that just as the beneficiary is a son of King Arthur, so when Gyges is the hero of the same chain of events, he too is the (adopted) son of a figure bearing the name Arduš – the same name indeed as that of the 'greatest of knights' discussed in the previous chapter. Nor is it inconceivable that Gyges has been simply Anglicised by softening the initial g and equating it with the most readily available English name Jack itself. Here are the two events in synopsis:

King Arthur's son

Gyges complex

Son of King Arthur has amazing helper Jack

(adopted) Son of Arduš (*not* the king)

who pays visit to his cousin, a giant, who hides underground

finds the tomb of a giant underground

he terrifies the giant into giving him a ring of invisibility

he robs a ring of invisibility from the corpse of a giant buried underground

he goes into a lady's chamber and decapitates her lover, another giant

he goes into the royal bedroom and kills the king

he brings the giant's head to her and claims her hand for King Arthur's son

he is able to marry the queen

That, then, is the short-cut. The chapbook and the ancient tale of Gyges are telling the same story, and in both cases about the son of *an* Arthur. Doubtless eyebrows will be raised at the use of a nineteenth-century children's book (for such it is) as serious evidence for the redating of King Arthur a thousand years back; and it could be contended that this is simply a matter of setting Jack in a remote age, which might just as well have been that of King Alfred or Old King Cole. It is useful, therefore, to come to the same conclusions by a more circuitous, but no less effective route.

The text about Gyges we must look at in the first instance is the same one: a brief illustration in Plato's *Republic*, in which an adventure of this by now fabulous figure offers an example of wrong moral choice. Plato is discussing power without responsibility:⁸

like that of the ancestor of the Lydian (i.e. Croesus' ancestor Gyges⁹). For they say that he was a shepherd working for the ruler of Lydia; there was a great rainstorm and earthquake, and this caused a rift in the ground and a chasm at his pasture. Gyges saw this and in amazement climbed in and saw among other marvels a hollow bronze horse with doors; he peeped through and saw a corpse that seemed to be larger than human size; there was nothing else, but it had a golden ring on its finger; he put it on and climbed out. And when there was the usual meeting of shepherds to report monthly to the king on the flocks, he too attended with the ring on his finger. Sitting down then with the others he happened to turn the collet of the ring towards the inner side of his hand; when this happened none of his companions could see him, and they spoke about him as if he were no longer present. He was amazed, and fumbling a second time with the ring he turned the collet to the outside once more, and so became visible again. On observing this he experimented to see if the ring really had this power; it indeed turned out that if he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, and on turning it back he became visible again. When he realised this he immediately contrived to become one of the messengers who reported to the king. And then he came and seduced the king's wife, and together with her he attacked the king, killed him, and took possession of the kingdom.

Plato's particular angle does not encourage him to give much detail beyond what is necessary to explain the way the ring works. We are not given information about the other evident wonders underground, and the goings-on at the palace seem no sooner said than done. The major storytelling version besides Plato's is that of Herodotus,¹⁰ for whom means and motivation alike are entirely different:

This Candaules then was infatuated with his own wife, and in his obsession he fancied she was by far the most beautiful woman alive. As a result, Candaules kept praising his wife to his favourite body-guard Gyges son of Dascylus, the confidant of his most important affairs. A little later (for Candaules was doomed for misfortune) he spoke like this to Gyges: 'Gyges, I do not think you believe me when I speak about my wife's beauty (for people find their eyes more trustworthy than their ears); you will have to find a chance to see her with nothing on.' But Gyges protested loudly: 'Master, what an unwholesome suggestion, to ask me to see my mistress with nothing on: a woman takes off her sense of shame when she takes off her shift. For long enough proper rules have been established, and we must learn from them. One is this: to set eyes only on what is ours to see. I for my part accept that your wife is the most beautiful in the world, but I ask you not to ask me to do what is wrong.'

Despite his total repugnance Gyges is forced to obey his master. The queen, however, sees him escaping from the royal bedroom and confronts him with the choice of murdering and succeeding the king with her help, or dying for having seen a forbidden sight, and he 'chooses to live', as Herodotus puts it.

The force of this narrative is that Candaules is entirely to blame: his servant had no means of disobeying, let alone any ring of invisibility; and the queen, with evidently no previous feelings for Gyges, has this loyal servant murder her own husband in what is implied to be an act of legitimate vengeance for the affront to her personal dignity.

If we put the two versions together, as far as they are compatible, we find two striking themes juxtaposed: magical powers conveyed by the property of a corpse, and a ruler who makes his wife in some sense 'available' to someone else. A much more detailed and 'historicising' testimony of the accession of Gyges is offered once more by Nicolaus of Damascus, again evidently drawing on material from the lost Lydian histories of Xanthus. There are no magic rings or 'bedroom history' here, though a personal impulse triggers off direct political consequences: but it does not take long to see an overall congruence behind the contradictions of the three accounts:¹¹

[S]adyattes the last king of the Lydians was deposed in this way. There was in Sardis an uncle of Dascylus who had moved to Pontus, called Arduus son of Gyges. This man entreated [S]adyattes the king, while aggrieved at his lack of a family, to give him Dascylus, so that his house should not die out, since he himself had no surviving children. And it was now proper to make peace with the Dascyloi, and he added that the ancestors of the king were calling them to Lydia from their exile. The king complied with Arduus' request. And he sent to Dascylus and brought him to Lydia. And he did not obey since he loved his country, but he sent him his son Gyges, a boy of about eighteen. This boy Arduus received and treated as his own son. And Gyges was exceptionally tall and good looking, noble in war and by far the finest of his contemporaries, and cultivated horses and weapons. And a report went about him to the king, about his handsome features and his attainments, whether the report was truthful or motivated by envy, so that mischief should befall him. But the king was delighted and sent for Gyges, and was much taken with his appearance and stature, and ordered him to be one of his bodyguards. A little later he himself, so they say, suspecting the youth's nobility, did not plan to kill him in the open . . . but some other way, ordering him to do great and difficult labours, setting him on goats and other animals. And all this Gyges did thanks to his strength. And then because of these actions Sadyattes had a change of heart and was his friend, amazed at his energy, and ending his previous suspicion made over to him a great tract of land. And on this Gyges prospered. . . . Then Sadyattes was

intending to marry Tudo the daughter of Arnossus the king of Mysia, who founded a city Ardynion in the plain of Thebe. When it was time to go for the girl, he yoked a chariot and put Gyges on it and sent him out to his parent-in-law, to fetch the bride. And they say the following portent occurred. Two huge eagles settled on his chamber when he was about to set off, and the seers declared that the girl would be the wife of two kings in the one night. After a long interval Gyges arrived, her father gave away the bride, and he took her off. As he rode his chariot, Gyges fell in love with her, and being unable to contain himself made an attempt on her and made some confession of love. But she angrily turned him down and showered him with dire threats. When they arrived at the palace, she told all that Gyges had done, and that he had wanted to sleep with her. The king was furious and swore an oath to kill Gyges the next day. A servant girl who was infatuated with Gyges heard this in the bedchamber, and told him everything at once. And while it was still night he ran round, confided in his friends, and begged them for help in an attempt to assassinate the king. And he reminded them also of the curse of Arduus laid upon the slayers of Dascylus. And opting in these circumstances to kill [S]adyattes rather than be killed by him, he prepared the trustiest of his friends and rushed with a sword on him. The serving-maid opened the doors, he rushed in and killed Sadyattes as he slept; he had reigned for three years.

At dawn he sent in leisurely fashion for each of his friends and enemies, as if the king was summoning them, and some he destroyed – those he thought would oppose him – but others he bribed and made his allies. And when he had gathered a great many, he assumed command, armed his full force, went out into the square and summoned the Lydians to an assembly. At first they were in confusion, regarding the affair with horror, and made to rush against Gyges. But he settled them and asked to speak, in order to inform the crowd of what it did not know, and with difficulty he settled the hubbub, since some wanted clear news and others were afraid of his troops, and so they quietened down. And they sent to Delphi to see if they should adopt Gyges as their king. The God instructed them to do so, adding that the Heracleidai would be avenged on the Mermnads in five generations. And so Gyges son of Dascylus ruled the Lydians and married the Mysian girl, the bride of Sadyattes; he bore no grudge for what she had said against him.

There is a fourth piece of this not fully fitting jigsaw for our purposes: according to an isolated nugget of information in Plutarch,¹² Gyges' followers had contrived to gain possession of the Royal Axe of the Heraclids; and by implication this affects the transfer of fortune between the dynasties of the Heraclids and their successors the Mermnads.

Once these versions are pieced together we have a composite version that looks something like this:

- 1 Gyges is a courtier who has risen from humble circumstances (though earlier in Nicolaus it is clear that his family is noble).
- 2 He has obtained a talisman from a corpse, with powers of invisibility.
- 3 He is tempted (in one sense or another) by the ruler's wife or prospective wife.
- 4 He succumbs, and his own life is at risk; but he survives to kill the king and take over the queen, either alone or with the aid of trustworthy helpers.
- 5 He has a blood-feud vengeance to carry out.
- 6 The king supplanted by Gyges has green associations (Herodotus gives him the Hellenising name Myrtilus son of Myrsus). The version in Nicolaus supplies the key element of a helper not necessary in versions where the murderer is invisible, but present none the less in the Jack tale with which we began.

Much speculation was offered at the beginning of the last century by K.F. Smith,¹³ who tried to piece together still further testimonies into a much more tightly compact version; if this tended to be a little too arbitrary, it was his achievement to stress the folktale nature of large parts of all three main accounts, for which he suggests without detailed illustration the analogue of Alladin on the one hand, and the simpleton who rescues the maiden from a giant by means of a magic object on the other. We are now much better placed to present materials, but also to suggest an overall pattern to which a framework of this sort might belong. The story, especially with Plato's contribution, belongs most closely with the Aarne-Thompson Types 505–507¹⁴ ('The grateful dead'), in which in particular the power of invisibility conferred by a dead man allows an unlikely candidate to triumph in the acquisition of a kingdom and a bride. Here is the outline of a Scottish Gaelic version collected in the nineteenth century:¹⁵

A son driven out of his kingdom by his father because of a scheming stepmother is given a companion in a Green cloak: it confers invisibility, and the companion can scout ahead. The hero has a fancy for the girl he wants to marry (after rejecting two candidates, the third sets impossible tasks, of bringing two hidden objects and 'the lips she kissed the last night'. (These turn out to be those of a giant.) With the aid of the invisible companion the hero retrieves the objects and finally presents the giant's head (if he does not, his own head and that of his keeper will be forfeit). The hero marries the princess, whose giant lover he has thus executed by means of the green man's powers of invisibility (the princess having previously been bound by a spell to love the giant).

Fuller versions of the story have the mysterious green-cloaked helper beheaded by the hero before he can finally consummate his relationship with the princess.¹⁶

It is now our task to show that the accounts of Gyges represent a chain of activities associated in the Arthurian tradition with Gawain or his cognates. The two partially convergent components of the Gawain story that need to be considered are adventures with a perilous bed: the knight is lured into some tempting sexual situation, to be ambushed during the night; and he has to behead a gigantic green figure connected with the lady in the bed.¹⁷ Scarcely two versions are alike, either classical or medieval, but we can assure ourselves that comparison is not a fruitless task by noting the relationship of the names at the very outset. The name pattern of Gawain and his opponent can be related to that of Gyges and Candaules. Gyges is a Mermnad, one of the sons of the hawk;¹⁸ the Welsh rendering of Gawain was Gwalchmai 'Hawk of May';¹⁹ Candaules is glossed in Herodotus by 'whom the Greeks call Myrsilus son of Myrsus':²⁰ 'myrtle son of myrtle', an evergreen bush.

Perhaps the tidiest picture is afforded by a sequence of Gawain episodes in Heinrich von der Türlin's thirteenth-century German Romance *Diu Krône*, which is basically an unusual form of the Graal Romance with Gawain as the central contestant: Gawain has an adventure where he acquires a talisman of victory (actually a stone) from the belt obtained from a knight Fimbeus whom he has conquered;²¹ in a separate adventure he has custody of gloves of invisibility which he requires apparently in order to undertake the Graal Quest.²² There is also a separate adventure again where he is incarcerated underground through the movement of a mountain;²³ as well as the much more usual adventure where he is at a castle of maidens and survives a fatal bed test in which as he lies in bed, in potentially amorous circumstances, an attempt is made on his life.²⁴ The first three of these adventures we might relate to the episode of Gyges' acquisition of the ring in the underground chamber; the fourth we might relate to the risk to Gyges' life in the royal palace.

A late English ballad version, *The Turke and Gowin*, has probably the completest connexions to our Gyges and to the 'Green Man' folktales; unfortunately it is bedevilled by several missing half-pages. After giving the blow to the Turk, Gowin comes to a hill where the earth opens and closes in a storm:²⁵

He led Sir Gawaine to a hill soe plaine;
The earth opened and closed againe,
Then Gawaine was adread;
The Merke was comen and the light is gone;
Thundering, lightning, snow and raine
Thereof enough they had.

The hero now goes with the Turk to the land of the king of Man, a heathen hostile to Arthur, and with the aid of the Turk he makes himself invisible and

overcomes in the contests with three giants. He now has to cut off the head of the Turk (who turns into a handsome man), and they liberate seventeen ladies from the castle (compare the eighteen of the West Highland version quoted). The classic Middle English text *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* gives elements of the action in again a puzzling form: beheading contest at the beginning and not at the end; temptation of Gawain at the castle of the Green Knight; the hero's refusal of a ring talisman from the Green Knight's wife, but his acceptance of a girdle of invulnerability; and he finally meets the Green Knight himself in the Green Chapel in a ravine.²⁶

Two texts stress the sensual aspect of the whole business, rather in the manner of Herodotus' account of Gyges. In *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle* the Carl gives hospitality to Gawain, but insists first that the knight should get into bed *with the Carl's wife* while he himself looks on; he instructs Gawain to kiss and fondle his wife, but to go no further.

They told Sir Gawain to get into the bed, which was elegantly covered with beautiful bright cloth-of-gold. When this joyous bed was made, the Carl ordered his own lady, who was so delightful to look at, to get into it. A squire came in a discreet manner and disarmed Gawain at that point. His things were taken off in the proper way. The Carl said, 'Sir Gawain, go and take my wife in both your arms and kiss her while I look on.'

Sir Gawain immediately answered him: 'Sir, your command shall certainly be carried out, even indeed, if you kill or slay me or throw me down.' He went at once to the bed with great swiftness. For the softness of the lady's body prompted Gawain to carry out his wish on that occasion. The Carl watched carefully. When Gawain wanted to perform the secret act the Carl at once said, 'Whoa there! I don't allow that game to you. . . . 'Tis now twenty winters ago', said the Carl, 'since I made a vow to God, for which I was very sorry, that no man should lodge in my castle without being actually slain, unless he did as I ordered him. If he would not obey my command instantly, he would be killed and laid low, whether he were a lord or a servant'.²⁷

After the episode with the wife, the Carl then leaves Gawain in bed with his daughter. It transpires that he kills any who disobey his orders in any particular, and Gawain is the only one to survive.²⁸ The same rule applies in the *Chevalier à l'Épée*, where it is only the daughter who is instructed to expose herself to Gawain, and warns him of the concealed sword that will kill him if he actually makes love to her.²⁹ The various versions are best seen in synopsis:

SOME ANCIENT GAWAIN-FIGURES

<i>Gyges</i>	<i>Green Man</i>	<i>Green Knight</i>	<i>Jack Texts</i>
Gyges son of Ardus		Gawain	King Arthur's son
hero's master is Myrsilus (myrtle)	hero has contest with Green Man	hero has contest with Green Knight	
finds giant's body in underground tomb	finds Green Man in other world	finds the Green Knight at Green Chapel in a cleft	has companion who locks giant underground
sees king's wife naked, is seduced by or seduces her	sees Green Man's daughter naked	is wooed by Green Knight's wife or has to take her to bed	woos a giant's lover
she helps him escape with his life and kill the king (he is invisible)	she helps him with father's tasks	she protects him with token of invulnerability	companion helps with cloak of invisibility
she marries him	she marries him	he marries Green Knight's daughter	he marries lady

We could again underline the very fast proof of the 'Arthurian' background to Gyges from comparison with the chapbook text alone: Gyges gets a means of invisibility from an underground giant, and is able to kill the king and marry the queen; King Arthur's son is able to get a means of invisibility from a giant locked underground, kill a lady's giant lover and marry the lady. Gyges is the adopted son of an Ardus, so the tales are being told of the same individual; therefore Arthur's son's exploit in the Jack text must be as old as Gyges.

There is a further Arthurian text which offers an important package of points of context with the Gyges complex, once more with Gawain as the central focus. In the *Vengeance Raguidel* attributed to Raoul de Houdenc we have the following outline: A mysterious corpse transfixd by a lance, wearing five rings, and lying in a chariot, is carried by sea to King Arthur's court: there is a message that the vengeance for its murder must be accomplished by the knight(s) who are able to remove the lance and the rings: Gawain removes the lance, Yder the rings. They eventually accomplish the vengeance by killing the murderer Guengasoain, and Gawain accompanies Yder to court a lady Udain. He becomes her lover, but she is eventually faithless and he passes her on.

Here we seem to have something very close to both Plato and Nicolaus; we also have a new connexion which suggests that Gyges, far from stealing the ring, is really obliging the corpse with blood-vengeance, with the possibility that the corpse from which the ring is taken is really that of Dascylus himself. We also have, as so often in this kind of tale-complex, the idea that the central female character is volatile and can change her loyalties, a trait we might well believe in the wife of Candaules.

It is not only texts containing the name Gawain that invite comparison to the Gyges-texts: we have already seen that Gyges was one of the Mermnadai, and his family name with its awkward combination of medial consonants is not easy for foreign cultures to assimilate or reproduce. We should look carefully at the outlines of texts where the hero is Sir Meriadeus, Meliadus, Meriadoc, and the like. (Malory succeeds in producing Sir Menaduke (19.11).) In the Latin Romance *Historia Meriadoci regis Cambriae*³⁰ the hero's career is as follows. Meriadoc's royal father is murdered and he is brought up humbly by a peasant Ivor; he is kidnapped to the Round Table by Sir Kay, and as a knight has a peculiar experience in the Otherworld (including a castle of fear and a time dislocation); he is promised the daughter of an emperor of Almayne if he rescues her from the clutches of King Gundebaldus. She is able to give him advice as to how the king can be killed, and she makes available to him the horse on which this can be done; by obeying her instructions Meriadoc kills Gundebaldus (who when unhorsed falls into a tar pit he had prepared for his victims). When Meriadoc claims the princess, her father, overawed by a still more powerful suitor, tries to discredit Meriadoc with an accusation of rape; one is reminded that in Nicolaus' account such a charge is brought against Gyges.³¹ Meriadoc defeats the new suitor and takes the princess after all. Once more there is a similarity of names: for Mermnades against Candaules we have here Meriadoc against Gundebaldus. If the latter seems an ordinary Western barbarian name, it may simply be the nearest equivalent of a foreign name of which we ourselves have only Herodotus' Greek transcription. It may represent an attempt to reproduce a *Canduwailes or *Candebules or the like.³²

Gawain and Dame Ragnall

One other Gawain-story of a more sinister kind can be linked to the ancient sources: the fairytale-like Middle English tale of Gawain's being required to marry a loathsome hag who is transformed on the wedding night into a young and beautiful bride, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*,³³ with its counterpart in Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and in a number of European analogues. If Gyges is to be identified with Gawain, a fragment of Xanthus³⁴ provides an unexpected component. The luxury of the Lydians was proverbial, and the Suda cites Xanthus as the source of a claim that

Gyges the king of Lydia was the first to castrate women, so that he could enjoy them always in the bloom of youth.

This does not of course enable Gyges to transform old women into young ones by means of the operation, but simply implies that the ageing process of those still young was thought to be reduced by castration. But it is not difficult to see how rumour and court gossip would exaggerate one supposed benefit into the other.

The sparing of Lixus-Lischois-Ligesauc

A further sub-episode may be used to connect Gawain and Gyges at this stage. In Nicolaus of Damascus³⁵ there is the story of one Lixus:

But when he was very close to him and gave him honour above all others many hated him out of envy, and criticised the king, including the Tylonian Lixus. This man found fault with [S]adyattes, because he afforded special treatment to Gyges, an ancestral enemy, and made him master of all. But the king did not pay any attention, but thought he made these criticisms out of envy. And since after repeating his complaints many times Lixus was unable to persuade him, he went through Sardis pretending to be mad and shouting, that Gyges the son of Dascylus was about to kill Sadyattes. . . . (After Gyges' coup) As for Lixus, Gyges forbade him to come into sight, swearing an oath that he would bury him wherever he first caught sight of him. And Lixus turned away on every occasion, travelling by other routes, denied access to royal highways. Gyges however wanted to seize him, but was unwilling to do so in contravention of his oath. And one of his friends suggested that if he wanted to arrest him in accordance with the oath, he should turn aside to the roads Lixus usually travelled by; the friend claimed to know them. Gyges ordered the man to lead and he drove his chariot that way, and it chanced that Gyges came across Lixus at a bend in the road. As the road was narrow and he had nowhere to turn from the royal gaze, Lixus slipped under the chariot and tried to hide. Gyges realised this and gave orders to pull him out, and when his servants dragged him out and put him in front of the chariot, Gyges said: 'Here, Lixus, you must be buried; that was our agreement'; and Lixus did not grovel, but said, 'It is more just for you to suffer this, since you pursued me along roads that are not fit for a king to travel.' His friends took a long time trying to persuade Gyges to be reconciled with him, and spare him from execution. But he affirmed that he had taken an oath to bury him wherever he first came across him. But they argued, 'Whenever he dies, bury him there, and you will have fulfilled your oath.' And he was persuaded and on that argument let Lixus go.

We have two texts in which a character with a name similar to Lixus' features in Arthurian texts. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* Gawain comes up

against one Lischois, and he has a complementary function in the context there. Lixus wants to protect Sadyattes; Lischois is fending off suitors to the Lady Orgelluse de Logrois, currently in the power of King Gramoflanz, who has killed her husband Cidegast; she at first haughtily rejects Gawain, who will eventually win her, as Tundo first rejects the overtures of Gyges. There is none of the equivocation over how Lischois can be killed in spite of a truce; but again the episode is about his being spared; the defeated knight twice refuses to surrender, even when lying beneath Gawain, and the latter tries to negotiate; they fight a second time with the same result, and finally Gawain agrees to spare him out of love for Orgelluse herself.³⁶

A second prospective Lixus-figure is the Ligesauc who features much earlier than Wolfram in the eleventh-century Latin *Vita Cadoci*.³⁷ This time his prospective executioner is not Gawain but Arthur himself.

A most powerful leader of the Britons, called Ligesauc . . . killed three knights of Arthur. Then he was pursued by Arthur wherever he turned, and he found nowhere that was safe, and nobody would protect him from fear of the aforesaid king.

The fugitive takes refuge with a holy man for seven years, but when Arthur discovers his whereabouts, St. Caradoc undertakes to negotiate: instead of killing Ligesauc, Arthur should receive compensation in cattle for each of the slain warriors, but then Arthur tries to specify the colour of the cattle so that Ligesauc will not be able to meet the compensation and so be killed; only by the saint's prayers does a miracle change the colour of the cattle. As with Lixus, we have this time the notion of the offender as an outlaw pursued by a relentless opponent determined to get round the sparing of the victim. In spite of their different details both these texts contain complementary accounts of a man with a name with the root *Liks.

We can tabulate the overall tally of resemblances as follows:

<i>Gyges</i>	<i>Gawain</i>
uncle Arduis (Nicolaus)	uncle Artus (French form)
has to avenge a blood-feud (Nicolaus)	has to avenge a blood-feud (Rigaudel)
falls into tomb through landslip	landslip (followed by underground adventure?) (Turke and Gowin)
removes ring from a corpse in a bronze horse (Plato)	removes lance from corpse on chariot; companion removes rings (Rigaudel)

becomes invisible (through ring) (Plato)	becomes invisible (through glove) (Diu Krône)
opponent is Myrtle-king (Herodotus)	opponent is Green Knight/Turke (Green Knight texts)
Hawk-name (<i>Mermnas</i>)	Hawk-name (<i>Gwalchmai</i>)
is forced by king to view his naked wife	is forced by knight to lie in bed with his wife (Carl of Carlisle)
or attempts to rape king's bride (Nicolaus)	Meriadoc (cf. Mermnades) is accused of rape of king's prisoner (<i>Historia Meriadoci</i>)
contested wife Tudo (Nicolaus)	contested lady Udain (Rigauzel)
wife helps him to kill king (Herodotus); separate lady lover helps him to survive (Nicolaus)	wife helps him to kill king (wife gives him charm of invulnerability); or he beheads Green Knight
he gains control of kingdom	

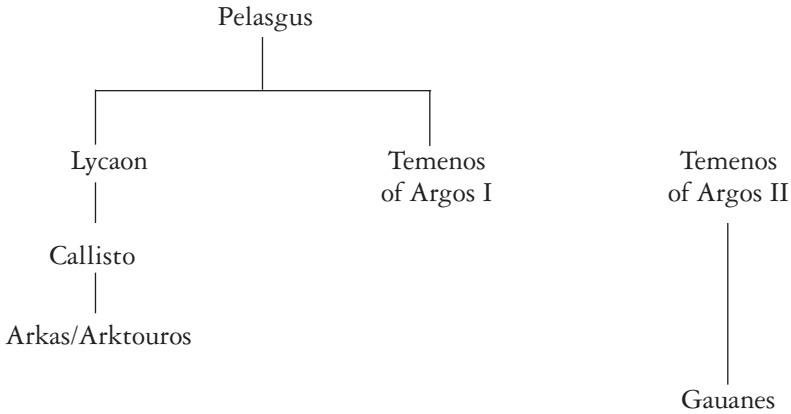
We are now able, then, to confirm a Gawain-figure in the vicinity of Ardu of Lydia; but can we provide one for our original Arcadian Arkas/Arktouros?

Gauanes son of Temenos

Our next Gawain-candidate can be brought into some kind of relationship with the Arkas/Arktouros with whom we began. If we examine his genealogy further, the latter's dubious grandfather Lycaon turns out to have a brother Temenos (both are sons of the traditionally aboriginal Pelasgos, who has pre-Greek associations with Arcadia, Argos and Thessaly).³⁸ Two people of that name are known in Greek mythology: the first, credited with the raising of Hera, is the brother of (the right) Lycaon and the son of Pelasgus. A much later one is associated with the division of the Peloponnese among Heraclid rulers, and becomes King of Argos.³⁹ This is the ancestor of Gauanes, descendant of Temenos (Lot), discussed as the figure with Graal associations in Macedonia.⁴⁰ Any (inevitable) confusion or conflation of the two Temenoi is likely to produce an Arktouros and a Gauanes in the same family tree (see p. 86).

As several generations elapse in any case between Gauanes and the second Temenos and between the second Temenos and the (literally) antediluvian first

SOME ANCIENT GAWAIN-FIGURES



bearer of the name, it would be easy enough by the time of Gauanes himself to conflate both these remote Argives into a single figure. That would bring Arktouros into the same stemma as Gauanes, descendant of Temenos ('Lot'), giving us three Arthurian figures together *by name*. We should note that the Temenos appears on the borders of Lydia and Phrygia much later in connexion with the foundation of Temenothouroi, Temenus gates; as so often there is a connexion with West Asia not too far off.

A Persian Gawain: Gaevani/Gevan, Vevan, Giv

Further east than Lydia there is also a place for a Gawain-figure, and this time unmistakably by name: in the Zoroastrian scriptures⁴¹ and in the medieval Persian epic Firdausi's *Shah-Nama*. We shall note in due course the considerable contribution of this latter work to supplying comparative material on Tristan in the person of Feridun.⁴² On Gawain the Persian epic is no less helpful. We are here offered a figure Giv or Giw, presented in the Pahlavi scriptures as Vevan (in a matching doublet that secures the identification, both figures being paired with Tus); and earlier in the Avesta itself the same figure also seems to occur as Gaevani. He is one of a number of figures round first Kay Kavus then Kay Khosrow in the company of the charismatic Rostam, and at times he is second only to the latter. He makes a suggestion, for example, that knights hunt in the territory of the Turanian enemy king Afrasiyab; he and Tus save a damsel in distress wandering in the forest for Kay Khosrow; he rides with Rostam over a surging river after argument with the mercenary ferryman; when his son is trapped by the daughter of Afrasiyab he attends Khosrow's consultation of a magic cup used to detect the missing child's whereabouts; he is in quest of the Iranian light-nimbus;⁴³ and he is one of the last companions to ride off to death with the ageing king Kay Khosrow, to disappear in a snowstorm in

the mountains. The Pahlavi scriptures add that there they will await the day of Resurrexion. This motif allies the story less to the voyage to Avallon than to the motif of Arthur's incarceration with his knights in a mountain. We note also that Gawain figures in rain and snows when he receives a vision of Arthur's future demise.⁴⁴ None of these features is directly comparable to any specific adventure of Gawain (except conceivably the adventure with the cup); but collectively they have some cumulative force, and it has to be said that if the rescue of the damsel in the forest were presented in translation with the Gevan form of the name, no Arthurian scholar would have any reason to doubt that it came from a Western text:⁴⁵

The two knights (Giv [Gevan] and Tus), once having penetrated into the forest, cast about for a time in search of game, and as they pressed forward they came upon a ravishing maid, towards whom, with smiling lips, they hastened. For beauty she had not her peer in the whole world; there was no detail of her loveliness in which a flaw was to be discovered. Said Tus, addressing her, 'Enchanting maiden, who was it guided you into this forest?' She said: 'My father beat me yesterday night, so I forsook my land and home. In the darkness of the night he had returned in a drunken state from a wedding feast. When he saw me in the distance, in the confusion of his mind he drew a gleaming sword and would have hewn my head from my body.' The hero questioned her about her kinship, and she replied recounting every detail, saying that she came of the family of Garsivaz and that her lineage ascended to [King] Faridun. He then asked, 'How came you here, being on foot, horseless and lacking a guide?' She said, 'My horse lingered behind, having in its exhaustion left me seated on the ground. I had money and jewels beyond counting and, on my head, a golden crown. Over there they took my horse from me and someone beat me with the scabbard of a sword. I ran away in fear and came into this forest weeping tears of blood. When my father is restored to sobriety again he will undoubtedly send knights in search of me with speed. My mother too will come in haste. I have no desire to forsake my country or my home.' The hearts of the two heroes warmed towards her, and the head of Tus son of Nowzar was unsteadied. This prince said, 'I found her. That is why I galloped so fast ahead.' But Gevan said, 'Commander-in-chief, surely you were together with me, and there was no escort with you.' At that Tus son of Nowzar became inflamed and said, 'How? My horse reached here first', to which the other retorted, 'I galloped ahead seeking for game. Do not utter falsehoods for the sake of a slave-girl. No man of honour seeks a quarrel.' To so high a pitch of violence did their wrangling come that they were on the point of cutting off the girl's head. At last a nobleman intervened to say, 'Carry her to the king of Iran and

obey such command as he imposes.' When Kavus caught sight of the maiden's face he smiled, but kept his lip within his teeth, saying to the two warriors, 'The hardships of your journey are now at an end. This is a mountain-doe, truly a heart-ravishing gazelle; but game appropriate only to the highest. We will spend the day telling the story of how certain warriors caught the sun with hunting cheetahs.' To the girl he said: 'What is your kinship, for your face is lovely as a peri's?' She answered, 'On my mother's side I am a princess, and on my father's I am of the stock of Faridun. My grandfather is the puissant commander Garsivaz, whose encampment lies on the frontier there.' He then said, 'Can one throw such a face and hair and lineage as yours to the winds? It would be my task to set you in a place of gold and make you queen over my loveliest ones.' In reply to that she said, 'I have gazed upon you and chosen you out from amongst all the mightiest.'

The *Shah-Nama* itself dates at the latest from the early eleventh century AD, and reasonably claims to draw on much earlier (pre-Islamic) tradition. The chronology of the legendary Keysian dynasty in Iran is long before Sikander (Alexander the Great). So we have here an instance of medieval chivalric incident and ethos, undertaken by Giv/Gewan, in an Iranian text a century before Geoffrey let alone Chrétien, dealing with a Giv/Gewan as old as the Gauanes of Herodotus whom we are about to meet next. Once more we can anticipate the surprise Westerners should have found in finding Arthurian material waiting for them in the East, just as Ps.-Alan of Lille claimed in the twelfth century itself. We might also keep an open mind on whether we are looking at Parzival in the Garsivaz of the same passage. If we are, the chronology of these knights is awry, as Garsivaz is already old. But that may not be the end of the story.

Lancelot and the Ladi(es) of the Lake

If traces of Gawain are relatively easy to detect and to make sense of, the origins of the figure of Lancelot have proved persistently difficult to account for, not least because of the difficulty of breaking down the name itself: Loomis argued for identification with Llwhc Llawwynnyawc, who aids Arthur in *Culhwych* in his quest for the cauldron of Diwrnach, and the Llenlleawc who helps him in *Preiddeu Annwfn*;⁴⁶ this was challenged by Bromwich (1966), who notes that Welsh sources translate Lancelot as Lawnslod/Lawnslot. Littleton-Malcor offered a characteristically 'Alanic' solution, suggesting a prodelided form of Alanus-à-Lot.⁴⁷ With the added possibilities offered by an ancient and Near-Eastern Arthuriad we should at least look elsewhere. What we shall find is exceedingly confused, and it is difficult to offer even an approach to coherence. But that is not a licence to ignore the evidence we have.

The traditional Arthurian career of Lancelot in the Romances can be briefly summarised. His title is Sir Lancelot du Lac, as he has been abducted as a child by a fairy or by the Lady of the Lake; he is a figure associated with heroic feats, and a right-hand man of Arthur; he conducts siegecraft, as when he takes the stronghold of the Douloureuse Garde; but his more memorable role for better for worse is as the protector and adulterous lover of Guinevere. There are other amorous interludes: he is tragically loved by Elaine of Astolat/Shalott/Escalot, who arranges for her corpse to be floated to Arthur's Court; he nearly kills Elaine of Corbenic for seducing him by impersonating the queen, and having a child by him, the successful Graal quester Galahad; he is held prisoner for more than a year by Morgan le Fay, who fails to seduce him; he himself comes close to the Graal but does not win the quest. His relationship with the queen contributes to the destruction of the Round Table fellowship itself. And there are peculiar interludes, as when he is forced to dance in a magical dance under arms. We can establish tentative and often unexpected ancient counterparts to most but not all of these aspects of Lancelot, under the name Mopsus or Moxus, who figures under one, two or even three possibly separate identities spread from the Argonautic expedition through the Trojan War to the legendary period of seventh-century Lydia and the age of Gyges. Any attempts at establishing resemblances to the name Lancelot come through the association of the latter end of Moxus/Mopsus' long career with the Syrian city of Askelon.

The conqueror of Meles/Maelwas/Meleagant

The first medieval text in which Lancelot serves as protagonist is Chrétien's *Chevalier de la Charrette*, in which Lancelot rescues the queen from Meleagant, often identified with the Maelwas of Celtic sources.⁴⁸ We have already noted the similarity of the latter form to that of Meles, who appears as a disreputable king in the 'Arthurian' sequence in Nicolaus, and who indeed succeeds Arduus himself, but is later forced into exile for three years before being restored.⁴⁹ Nicolaus also obligingly gives us a brief fragment elsewhere on the conqueror of Meles. His name is given as Moxus in Nicolaus, Mopsus in Xanthus.⁵⁰

Moxus the Lydian accomplished many fine deeds, and overthrew the tyrant Meles. He encouraged the Lydians to tithe their crops, as he himself had done, in honour of the gods.⁵¹ Afterwards there was a great famine, and people turned to oracles. . . . This man is said to have made many expeditions, and his fame was foremost among the Lydians for courage and justice.

So far so good. If Meles is Meleagant or Maelwas, then the conqueror will be equivalent to Lancelot, whatever his actual name. The fragment continues:

Moxus the Lydian . . . set out once more against the city of Krabos (Krambos? Nerabos?), besieged it for a long time, and sacked it; and he drowned the inhabitants in the neighbouring lake for their impiety.⁵²

One further piece of information on Moxus/Mopsus is available from Xanthus fr. 17a, concerning a drowning in a lake, of a specific victim:

Atargatis was captured by Moxos the Lydian and drowned with her son Ichthus ('Fish') in the Lake at Askalon, because of her outrage (*bybrin*), and was eaten by the fish.

It might reasonably be assumed, but not certainly, that the treatment of Atargatis is simply a part of the massacre at Krabos, an unidentified place but likewise near the Askalonian lake.

We have already noted the suspicion that Moxus as the conqueror of Meles fulfils the role of Lancelot. Now once more we come across a familiar name in the context of Lancelot: Askalon or some approximation to it figures in texts concerned with the tragic death of a girl caused by Lancelot in some sort of watery context. In a celebrated scenario in the *Mort Artu* and in Malory 18.19f., she floats downstream in a barge, with a letter accusing Lancelot of causing her death. Although the medieval tradition gives her a Christian burial on land,⁵³ the coincidence seems worth pursuing.

We are given further notices and slightly different accounts, in Diodorus (2.4.2ff.) and elsewhere, concerning the death of Atargatis:

Now in Syria there is a city Askalon, and not far away a great, deep lake full of fish. Beside it is the sacred precinct of a celebrated goddess, whom the Syrians call Derceto. She has a woman's head, but the rest of her body is all fish, for the following reason. The most learned local tradition goes like this:

Aphrodite was annoyed at the goddess just mentioned, and made her fall madly in love with a handsome youth among those who offered sacrifice there. Derceto slept with the Syrian and gave birth to a daughter, but in her shame at her misdemeanour she killed the Syrian and exposed the child in a rocky, deserted region; as for herself, out of shame she threw herself into the lake and changed her body into that of a fish. (The child, nourished by doves, becomes the celebrated queen Semiramis of Babylon.)

One notes in this context the identity of the Lady of the Lake as a White Serpent.⁵⁴ There is further variation: in Ps.-Eratosthenes Atargatis falls into the lake and is rescued by fish (Ps.-Eratosthenes *Cat.* 38).

Atargatis is well known as the local Syrian variant of a powerful oriental fertility figure, represented by Ishtar, Cybele and others, with substantial (if

repetitive) documentation in Graeco-Roman antiquity.⁵⁵ Moreover, she can now be seen to have impeccable Arthurian associations in her own right: as Atargatis she was one of the identifications in astronomical sources of the constellation Virgo, lying as already noted just behind Arcturus himself,⁵⁶ and earning a place in the literature of katasterism on that account.

We also have another connexion noted by Xanthus (fr. 8) between Lydia and Askalon:

Xanthus says in the fourth book of his *Lydian History* that Tantalus and Askalos were sons of [T]umenaëus. Askalos was chosen by Akiamus(?) the king of Lydia as a general to campaign in Syria, and there he fell in love with a maiden (*parthenou*), and he founded a city which he named after himself . . . the city is called Askalonion. People belonging to it are called both 'Askalonites' and 'Askalonians'.

We are here being told that the founder of Askalon was in love with a local girl, and we might at least be tempted to infer that it was this love-affair that prompted him to put a city there in the first place. It may be best however to try to keep our two Askalonian women separate, at least at this point. Let us look instead at the name of the key place itself, with which Mopsus and the eponymous founder Askalos were associated. The medieval spellings present the usual variety of forms; and *LSJ* note that the English word 'shallot' for an onion is indeed derived from Syrian Askelon (s.v. Askalonios), of which it would have been a speciality (*caepe Ascalonicum*). This presupposes at some stage an adjectival form **Askalotes*. She comes from the place that has been named after the Lydian agent of Akiamos, perhaps identical with Akimios, known to Nicolaus as an even greater predecessor of Arduus 'greatest of knights'.⁵⁷ So what is the founder's name? If it reflects the place, it could be from a medieval perspective either Askalon or Askalot. We have, it appears, found at least the basis of a Lancelot-figure in Askalos/Askalonites, which an Old French definite article will in due course augment into L'askalont or L'askalot – 'the man of Askalon'. (The Serbo-Croat/Belorussian *Tristan* uses the form Ancalot for Lancelot.)⁵⁸ But the change *ask* > *ank* is odd: it may conceal a process of assimilation and dissimilation of an unfamiliar form (askalos > **akkalos* > **ankalos*).⁵⁹ That is the nearest we can come by this route; by the standards that allow Winlogée in the Modena archivolt to be Guinevere (perfectly properly), it should be seen as at least satisfactory. But it has to be justified and substantiated by a good deal of correspondence in content. Both the founder of Askalon and Moxus would be associated with the name of the city, perhaps at widely different periods: we are reminded that medieval genealogies give Lancelot a grandfather of the same name; or they may be identical, if only by legendary conflation. Askalos has a brother Tantalus; the latter has Graal-seeking (or Graal-possessing) credentials, as we have noted elsewhere.⁶⁰

There is a further possibility of investigating the identity of Moxus. Xanthus offers the variant Mopsus, who has a career (with two or even three possibly separate identities) as a heroic-age seer. We find him as one of the seers on the Argonautic expedition:⁶¹ one is reminded of the resemblance of the underlying folktale to that behind *Culwch and Olwen*, with its Arthurian expeditionary force in search of precious objects abroad; Mopsus also participates in the struggle between Lapiths and Centaurs,⁶² on the Lapith side; and in the Caledonian Hunt.⁶³ One intervention in the Argonautic saga is particularly relevant: it is Mopsus who advises Jason to conduct a series of rites in honour of the great Phrygian Mother Cybele and lay a feast on the 'Bear mountain'.⁶⁴ The similarity of this deity in nature and religious function to Atargatis herself is well known. Thanks to Mopsus, a miracle takes place of bringing a spring into an unwatered landscape⁶⁵ – yet another restoration of Waste Land. In the same sequence it is implied that he participates in an armed dance undertaken by the crew, and commanded by Orpheus;⁶⁶ one thinks of the unusual episode in the *Prose Lancelot* where the knight is forced to dance in an armed dance in a magical trance.⁶⁷ Two Hesiodic fragments cited in Strabo give Mopsus a contest not only with his fellow seer Calchas on the Asiatic mainland, but the foundation of Mallos, and a further combat with the seer Amphilocheus. These are from the *Melampodia*, whose hero Melampus it will be remembered magically restores a maimed figure. The contest with Amphilocheus in this instance is a *monomachia* in which both are killed and are not to be buried facing each other.⁶⁸ Much is circumstantial, but we have the picture of a major Lydian warrior-figure with strong magical associations, as well as the identifying association with the Lake.

We also have the picture in a fragment of Callimachus⁶⁹ of Mopsus as a hunter with an association with Aphrodite: he takes a vow to sacrifice the first-fruits of his hunt to the goddess, and this is why the Pamphylians still sacrifice a boar to Aphrodite.

No one will pretend that the above account is free of problems: it is well to emphasise that a general air of plausibility is bedevilled by continued uncertainties in the details. As always, it is the Lancelot-figure who provides the most acute difficulties and does not easily seem to 'fit' any Arthurian scheme of things comfortably. There may have been more than one Mopsus (though heroic or prophetic homonymns are naturally liable to confusion); and it is difficult to tell apart the two ladies of Askalon. But it is worth noting that the more historical aspects of Bocchoris (Bohors, Bors) of Egypt, Gyges/Gawain of Lydia, and Moxus/L'Askelot/Lancelot of Lydia would have been at least sufficiently close in time in the seventh century BC to constitute a plausible legendary trio. Given the Egyptian connexions of Gyges that proved his downfall, we may not be wise to brand these associations as totally unhistorical.

By several routes, then, we come at least *towards* Lancelot. It may well be that the ladies in question are still to be distinguished: the one as Elaine of Astolat, the other as Lancelot's main associate, the Lady of the Lake, no less.

But the medieval sources are themselves confused: a Lady of the Lake is killed in Malory and Ulrich's *Lanzelet* by Balin, who kills and is killed by his own brother, as Mopsus kills and is killed by Amphilochus according to Hesiod.⁷⁰ Nor is it always clear whether Morgan le Fay is identical with or separate from the Dame du Lac. The Lady of the Lake's relationship with Lancelot is usually presented as the role of a foster-mother;⁷¹ she is sometimes apparently identical with Morgan le Fay, who keeps Lancelot captive for over a year of his adult life in the *Prose Lancelot*, and there is indeed an explicit love motive;⁷² but in this text the two are clearly distinct. But lover or protégé, he is characteristically *du Lac*. We have at least got him to a misadventure involving one if not more amorous women and a lake, and a plausible ancient Askalon as the address for Elaine

<i>Lancelot</i>	<i>Askalos</i>	<i>Mopsus/Moxus</i>
serves powerful king	serves powerful king of Lydia	serves king of Lydia
is taken and brought up by Lady of Lake	associates with maiden at lakeside site	
courageous and just	courageous and just	courageous and just
is notable lover		is devotee of Aphrodite
is notable champion		commander in Pamphylia
defeats Meleagant/Maelwas, king of Avallon, associated with apples, and also the kidnapper of Guinevere		defeats tyrant Meles, associated with apples (Meloeis)?
goes on expedition in search of Holy Graal		goes on expedition to land of cauldron of renewal (Colchis)
experiences Waste Land		experiences Waste Land
attempts to restore fertility		produces water in Waste Land

continued

SOME ANCIENT GAWAIN-FIGURES

<i>Lancelot</i>	<i>Askalos</i>	<i>Mopsus/Moxus</i>
hunter of white animal		goes on Caledonian Hunt; sacrifices promised boar to Aphrodite
is tricked into making love with Elaine of Corbenic		
takes castle of Douloureuse Guardé, after siege		takes city of Krabos(?) after siege
is loved by but rejects Elaine of <i>Astolat/Escalat</i> , who dies and exhibits her death afloat	gives name to <i>Askalon</i>	kills girl because of outrage and drowns her in Lake at <i>Askalon</i>
captures Eskalonne and removes curse imposed on it for a sexual crime ⁷³		
associate of Lady of Lake		she becomes Lady of Lake (by turning into mermaid)

This is probably as close as we can hope to get to suggesting that a Lydian associated with the Lake at Askelon is the Lancelot responsible for the death of the Lady of Shalott. It conveys the sense of considerable cover-up in the medieval versions: the Maid of Astolat's death is not associated with a physical relationship and the birth (let alone exposure) of a child, though Lancelot is indeed made the dupe of a ploy to bed him with the Fisher-King Pelles' daughter⁷⁴ with the same name as the girl, Elaine. That Atargatis' illegitimate son is called Ichthus ('Fish') at least encourages the suspicion that Askelon is yet another likely venue for Fisher-kings or their analogues. And J.W. Waterhouse's celebrated Victorian narrative painting of the Lady of Shalott acquires a chill, if the Lancelot-figure had a whole city population lined up to drown in an accompanying act of genocide.

What, then, can be said to be proven, or indeed provable? We can offer an ancient CV for Lancelot that points to a powerful military commander with a womanising reputation and association with at least one tragically amorous water-lady, and an association with the city that is acknowledged as the origin of Shalott. We have no trace of the involvement with Arthur or Guinevere.

We can choose to see all this as speculative and vague; but if that is how we see it, we are doing no more or less than looking at a mirror image of the medieval tradition itself: now one sees Lancelot, now one does not. But there are unexpected touches of consistency. The medieval tradition associates Meleagant/Maelwas with the *insula pomorum* in the Otherworld; the nearest we can find for a Greek explanation of Meles is *Meloeis* – ‘associated with apples’. More important, we have a strong sense, as with Arduus, Gyges and Kambles, that there is a good deal of real history here, and that we are not just dealing with one distraught victim of Love for Lancelot, but a genocidal massacre by a puritan fanatic.

HOLY GRAALS AND CIRCULAR OBJECTS

In the past the quest for the Holy Graal has been more easily detachable from an early British context than most Arthurian material. It did not figure in Geoffrey of Monmouth in the early twelfth century, and only comes into an Arthurian context as the Holy Graal in the unfinished *Perceval* of Chrétien de Troyes, though the later-recorded Welsh tale that Arthur and his men went over to Ireland in search of the cauldron of Annwfn points to an earlier stage in the legend.¹ Thereafter, however, it persists within the framework of Arthurian materials to become almost a defining association; and it has continued to fuel the popular appetite for Arthurian and Celtic mysticism. In popular parlance ‘finding the Holy Graal’ of this or that has become proverbial for a well-nigh unattainable goal, to be mentioned in the same breath as the philosopher’s stone.

It will be helpful to define more closely what we are talking about. Unlike the Tristan materials, for example, the Graal-texts preserve an enormous variety of manifestations. The usual framework is a quest, where a hero or group of heroes goes to another country: he/they visit a king and/or his relations in a sumptuous palace in a Waste Land. The king himself is or is related to an ill old man, often with an old war wound, usually sustained by a magic plate, vessel, cauldron, or the like. There may also be a corpse or a severed head, a bleeding lance, or some other feature which occasions or requires the avenging of a murdered man by the Graal seeker. There is often too some kind of hitch: an ignorant or naive hero may fail to perform some action that will somehow free the Graal people from their plight, so that he or some successor has to succeed only on a second attempt.

Two Graal stories in Herodotus?

Herodotus has a fair approximation to Graal-related material in his account of the early history of the Scythians (4.5):

The Scythians, so they claim, are the youngest of all peoples, and they say that they came into being in the following circumstances. The first

man in their country, which was previously uninhabited, was a man called Targitaus; they claim that he was the son of Zeus and of a daughter of the river Borysthenes – an incredible claim to my mind, but that is what they say. Targitaus they say had three sons, Lipoxais, Arpoxais, and the youngest, Colaxais; and while they were reigning gold objects fell from the sky into Scythia, a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a goblet. The eldest saw these first, and as he approached with a view to taking possession of them, the gold blazed up. He retreated and the second of the brothers came up, with the same result. When the flames had kept off both the elder brothers, the youngest approached and the fire was quenched, and so he carried the objects home. The eldest brothers acknowledged the portent and handed over the entire kingdom to Colaxais. . . . The sacred gold their kings guard very carefully, and honour it with magnificent sacrifices. And if any guardian of the gold falls asleep in the open air during the festival, the Scythians say that he will not last out the year.²

The idea of the youngest taking over the kingdom follows the normal line of the Graal tale – that Perceval, or some other figure as the youngest of three companions, gains sovereignty of the land (and Scythia could easily be seen as a Waste Land). And the golden cup fallen from heaven corresponds easily enough to the Graal, particularly in the matter of Wolfram's description of *lapis exilis*, plausibly (but not universally) read as *lapsit ex caelis* ('it fell from the skies').³ The king of the land can be seen from this description also as a Graal keeper. And it will be remembered that in some instances a Graal knight such as Galahad does indeed survive only for a single year after 'attaining the Graal'.⁴ We should note that the golden plough and yoke have the same kind of culture-heroic resonance as instructions of Triptolemus to produce domestic crops that Pausanias assigns to Arkas: Triptolemus would have come from heaven to provide the necessary lesson, whether or not he provided the tools.⁵

This version that Herodotus claims as 'Scythian' does not however provide us with any explicitly Arthurian names. But a still more neglected narration in Herodotus does do so. This time it occurs in Herodotus' account of the foundation of the royal house of Macedonia:⁶

Three brothers descended from Temenos – Gauanes, Aeropus and Perdiccas – had taken flight from Argos and had sought refuge in Illyria. From there they crossed into upper Macedonia and arrived at the city of Lebaea; there they were hired to do menial work for the king, one looking after the horses, a second the oxen, and the youngest, Perdiccas, the sheep and goats. In ancient times it was not only the ordinary people who were poor; even the royal houses had very little, and here it was the king's wife who cooked the food for them. And whenever she did the baking, the bread for the servant Perdiccas

swelled to double the usual size. When this went on happening every time, she mentioned it to her husband. And it immediately struck him that this was a portent of some great event, so he summoned the three servants and ordered them to leave his territory. The young men said they were entitled to their wages, and offered to go when they had been paid. Now the sun was shining through the smoke-hole in the roof of the building, so that when the king heard the mention of wages, he pointed to the sunlight and as if by divinely inspired mischance exclaimed: 'I give you the wages you deserve – take them!' The two elder brothers, Gauanes and Aeropus, were taken aback and did not make a move; but the young one, who just happened to have a knife about him, scratched a line on the floor round the patch of sunlight, and said 'Master, we accept what you are offering us.' Then three times he drew the sunlight into his lap, and left the city together with his brothers. . . . (They leave the kingdom, and after subsequent adventures go on to conquer first the land immediately surrounding Mount Bermium, and afterwards the rest of Macedonia, including, presumably, Lebaea itself.)

At first sight this tale might be read as a typical tale of divine assent to a change in dynasty. But it can also be understood in terms of two widespread and overlapping tale complexes. In the first place, this adventure reads like a very domesticated version of the quest of the Holy Graal. The magically doubling bread is described simply in terms of itself: but the bread is presumably served on some sort of platter, tray or container. The absence of knights does not disqualify the story from Arthurian associations: one thinks of Arthur's adventures with a few companions trying to wrest a pig from Tristan.⁷ The associations of this text can be confirmed by similarity to a no less homely Breton text, about one Peronnik, long recognised as a local and primitive version of the tale of Parsifal.⁸ It is clear from the end of this tale that the subsequent career of the hero is that of a Graal knight: he becomes King of Vannes, then Emperor of Rome, then finally King of Jerusalem, having gained a golden bowl and sword. But it is the beginning of the Peronnik tale that offers comparisons to Herodotus' tale: Peronnik starts off as a humble shepherd; he is able to double his food supply when he works for a poor woman, though by flattering her into doubling the amount, rather than by any miracle of leavened bread. Like Perdiccas he gains possession of a circle of enchantment, which gives him a mount for his quest for the coveted bowl and spear. The three in Herodotus go to Mount Bermium where Midas had his orchards. This is where Midas catches his satyr, as a result of which he obtains golden fruit, *inter alia*.⁹ (Herodotus does not tell us that they had a specific adventure there.) But one version of the Breton tale has Peronnik meet a corrigan (a supernatural figure) beside a magic apple tree, and gain from him a golden apple to further his quest for sovereignty.¹⁰

Other details in Herodotus are consistent with a Graal quest. In that adventure three knights visit a kingdom whose king is surrounded by poverty (an implication of the King of the Waste Land theme), and is strangely sustained by the miraculous food of the Graal. The youngest of the three is successful in being marked out as in some sense the successor to the Graal Kingdom. The motif of the changing bread does occur in Graal contexts,¹¹ as does some distinguishing mark for the youngest of the three (such as a gold circlet,¹² corresponding to the circle of sunlight).¹³ Indeed in one Graal version a golden chain is let down in front of Perceval, and a stone circle is removed from the middle of the hall while the meal is in progress.¹⁴ Other correspondences to the ring of sunlight also occur. The *Estoire* has a negative version of it: when Gawain fails the test, he is covered in gloom, while the sun shines elsewhere.¹⁵ In the Cistercian *Queste* the knights at Arthur's Court find the Graal itself preceded by a beam of sunlight.¹⁶ And in *Peredur* the hero is three times presented with cups prior to accepting the combat and submission of a giant.¹⁷

If all this is approximate, other indications are not: Gauanes is clearly and simply Gawain, as we have already noted in the previous chapter; and Lebaea is related to *lebes*, a cauldron or broad dish, supplying the place-name 'vesselville' or 'platter-ville' (i.e. Graal town). And it does seem an odd coincidence that an almost literal form of Gawain should have a father or ancestor Temenos, when Gawain is traditionally the son of Lot. A *temenos* is a lot, in the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon sense of an allocation of land. Herodotus' form of the name has the first e long, where both those of *temenos* are short. But we must allow for potential confusion through any Latin transcription which would not distinguish the vowel quantity. We seem to have found a Graal kingdom where no one was looking. One further common tradition should help to confirm the links. Perdiccas here serves in the role of successful Graal Knight, i.e. the role of Perceval or Galahad. Are there any other shared common characteristics? The only one I can find is quite distinctive: Perceval in a number of medieval traditions has a close relationship with his mother; she dies at his departure to become a knight. We have several allusions in Late Latin poetry and mythology to a Perdix or Perdiccas in love with his mother, variously given as Castalia, Polykarpe or Polycaste. In one of these it is the mother who dies as the result of disastrous love (Claudian);¹⁸ one recalls the fate of the mother of Perceval.

From such a complex, then, we can distinguish an ancient form of Gawain, participating already in some kind of Graal adventure. We can also take the opportunity to see what a Graal episode might look like when unaffected by the trappings of medieval chivalry and courtly décor so characteristic of, for example, the French verse romances from the time of Chrétien onwards. Herodotus' story would look much more comfortable in the Welsh *Mabinogion* than in most continental Arthurian literature. But at the same time it has to be acknowledged that the palette of Graal encounters and adventures is so wide and varied that once placed in that context the adventures of this first

Gauanes/Gawain and his friends scarcely looks so very different. Is this a unique tradition of Gawain, then, or can we extricate any more?

Maimed king and Waste Land in Nicolaus?

We should also test the fragments of Nicolaus previously discussed to determine whether there are any hints of Graal narrative surrounding Gyges. The text explains the background of Gyges as follows (Nicolaus *FGrH* 90. F44 and F45):

When Ardus was already growing old he enjoyed a great bond of friendship with Dascylus the son of Gyges, a Mermnad. This man was virtually in control of the whole of Lydia. So [S]adyattes, the son of Ardus, secretly killed Dascylus, out of fear that when his father died everything should be under him. But Dascylus' wife fled to her native Phrygia pregnant, in fear of the slayers of her husband. When Ardus found this out, he was greatly distressed and called the Lydians to an assembly; and he himself was brought to the place; he was on a litter because of his great age; and he himself accused the guilty (not knowing who they were), and called on the Lydians to look out for the slayer of Dascylus, and vowed countless curses on the murderers, and offered a reward for any who should wish to kill them if he caught them. And after a reign of thirteen years Ardus died.

When Meles was on the Lydian throne there was a famine, and people turned to oracles. And the god told them to exact justice for the death of Dascylus from their kings. When they heard this answer from the oracle-givers, and that it was necessary for the guilty to atone for three years for the slaughter, Meles flew of his own accord to Babylon. And he sent too to Phrygia to Dascylus' son, himself called Dascylus, the boy his mother was pregnant with when she fled, telling him to come to Sardis (the Xuaris of Xanthus, cf. Medieval Sarras) and receive recompense for his father's death at the hands of the Lydians – just as the oracles had prescribed. But [the boy] could not be persuaded, and argued that he had never seen his father, since he was still in the womb when he had been killed, and so it was not proper for him to meddle. Meles took flight and entrusted the kingship to Sadyattes of the line of Kadus, originally from Tylon, who received him as a fugitive and on his return from Babylon after three years dutifully restored the kingdom to him.

During the reign of Myrsus, Dascylus, the son of the Dascylus slain by Sadyattes, fearing that some plot should be hatched against him by the Heraclids, fled from Phrygia to the Syrian community in Pontus above Sinope. There he settled and married a local girl, who gave him a son Gyges.

Here we have at least a Waste Land scenario quite clearly delineated. The land is punished by a famine as the result of the murder of Dascylus, and will not be restored except in accordance with divine decree. An old king too frail to stand is carried in on a litter and demands vengeance from there, just as in Graal-texts the Waste king or his staff will reveal blood feuds to be settled by the questers.¹⁹ One thinks particularly of the scenario in the Welsh *Peredur*:²⁰

As he entered it, he saw a hall, and the door of the hall was open, and he went in. There he saw a lame grey-headed man sitting on one side of the hall . . . he went and seated himself on the other side of the hoary-headed man . . . then behold, a yellow-haired youth came and bent the knee before Peredur, and besought his friendship. . . . 'I came with the bloody head in the salver, and with the lance that streamed with blood from the point to the hand, all along the shaft; and the head was thy cousin's, and he was killed by the sorceresses of Gloucester, who also lamed thine uncle; and I am thy cousin. There is a prediction that thou art to avenge these things.'

And even the hesitation motif is there: the second Dascylus turns out to be unconcerned with the business of settling a blood-feud that took place before he was born. In conquering Sadyattes Dascylus' son, Gyges, will perform part of the Graal-style role in avenging the death of his ancestor. We should note that in Greek *daskillos* meant a kind of fish, and *diskillos* a platter, so that Dascylus can be presented as a Fisher-king whose name was easily confused with the word for the Graal platter which survives as *dyscyl* in the Celtic texts. It is as though we are seeing a Graal episode reduced to crudely historical presentation.

We should also note the fate of Meles here: faced with the wasting of the land because of the murder of Dascylus, he takes flight for three years, as evidently being unfit to hold the kingdom. We have various shady characters in Arthurian tradition who find themselves in this awkward position, with names ranging from Maelwas or Melias to Meleagant; usually such a character actually captures Guinevere, and some accommodation has to be reached to get her back, which this enemy of Arthur survives.²¹ The nearest I can find to this exile of Meles in Nicolaus is an episode in the *Queste del Graal*, in which Perceval is travelling with one Melias, and the latter comes upon a crown, which he puts on and is then forced to abandon.²² Again we may be looking at a literal and symbolic version of the same basic material.²³

But we also know of a much more ambitious Graal-style experience of Gyges, and from a very different class of source. We have contemporary (seventh-century BC) Akkadian inscriptional evidence of two embassies of Gyges to the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal to seek aid against raids from the north by the Cimmerians. The first of these at least was successful, but the relationship deteriorated when Gyges' independent foreign policy gave offence

to his Assyrian ally.²⁴ What we need to note is how Western eyes of the period or later might view Ashurbanipal: we have a sketch in Diodorus Siculus of the court of an Assyrian monarch through Greek eyes:²⁵

Sardanapallus (i.e. Ashurbanipal himself) . . . was the last of the Assyrian kings, and outdid all his predecessors in luxury and idleness . . . he lived the life of a woman, and spent his time with his concubines, and wore purple and the softest of spun wools.

This Greek impression accords well with the general impression of the Waste kings: wrapped in luxurious garments, attended by a considerable squad of women,²⁶ in the manner of oriental grandees.

This is of course in stark contrast to the account from the Assyrian side itself: the above-mentioned inscriptions give Ashurbanipal's account of contacts between himself and the Lydians, as follows:²⁷

His rider [set out] to enquire of my (i.e. Ashurbanipal's) well-being. He reached the border of my country. My men spotted him and asked him: 'Who are you, stranger, you, whose country's rider never travelled the road to the frontier?' They brought him [. . .] to Nineveh, my royal city, into my presence. (But of) all the languages of East and of West, over which the god Ashur has given me control, there was no interpreter of his tongue. His language was foreign, so that his words were not understood. From his territory . . . he brought with him. . . .²⁸

A second messenger then comes, whose tongue is evidently intelligible to the Assyrians, and

He related to me [. . .]. During the night [Ashur, the god revealed to me (in a dream).] Thus [he said to me:] 'Lay hold of the royal feet of Ashurbanipal, [King of Assyria], beloved of Ashur, [king of the gods]. Acknowledge his [overlordship][. . .]your [enemies? . . .]. You shall defeat, and you shall overwhelm them in battle.' I was overawed by [the dream] I had. I fulfilled [the order of] my god, and now I am relating (it) to my sovereign. From that day on, yearly, without interruption, I do bear a heavy tribute [and] against his (i.e. Ashur's) enemies I [constantly] rush forth.²⁹

(Gyges evidently defeats the Cimmerians with Ashurbanipal's support, but is in turn defeated and killed by them when he crosses the latter by helping the Egyptian Psammetichus.)³⁰

Two points in this account are relevant to an 'Arthurian' reading of the reign of Gyges. To ensure future prosperity, Gyges has to ask the right question. If

he is not understood, he does not do so. When he is understood, his kingdom prospers. Moreover, the image of Ashurbanipal fits the Waste King very neatly: the Greek perception quoted has him as an effeminate veiled secluded figure.³¹ Also, we may have Arthurian allusion to the Cimmerians. In Wolfram von Eschenbach *Parzifal* is the son of Gahmuret, and will in due course submit to the Waste King.³² And whatever the impressions of Gyges and Ashurbanipal of each other, Gyges did have spectacular vessels in his possession: he laid up a group of no fewer than six gold bowls as the Gygean treasure beside the throne of Midas at Delphi, and Herodotus himself reports these treasures as an eyewitness.³³ One of our two Gawain-figures seems to have got his Graal, so to speak.

We should take the opportunity to ask whether there is any connexion between Gyges and Gawain as actual names. In those forms, no such correspondence is apparent. But when we set forth a wider range of versions the possibility of correspondence becomes more likely. We find for Gawain such forms as Walwain, Walwannis, Galvain, or Gauvain: enough in short to show that g and w have at some stage become interchangeable, and that the basis of the name is the reduplication *gaga or *wawa. We should at least note the possibility that the Black Book of Carmarthen, referring to what must be a tomb of Gawain, refers to a Gugaun. There is a difficulty here: a grave verse is also quoted separately for Gwalchmai; but the form Gugaun occurs in a collective statement about four figures, March, Guythur and Arthur himself being the others.³⁴ There is at least the allegation of corresponding similarity in the nomenclature of Gyges. His supposed tomb at Sardis has a monogram motif that has been read as both *gugu* and *walwe*. As the details of this are hotly disputed it is unwise to rely on it as conclusive evidence.³⁵ But it helps to point to the root of the matter: that in archaic Greek script, and possibly in those from which it derives, gamma and digamma are easily confused anyway, aside from any possible phonetic relationship of g and w. In later Greek gamma could itself be used for digamma. All that can be said is that the hesitation between *galgan* and *walwan* appears to be reflected in Guges and Walwe; we should prefer to establish the identity on folkloric rather than philological grounds, though the latter are not incompatible with the former.

A reminder of the 'oriental' persistence of the theme is to be seen in the more exotic versions of the *Alexander Romance*, a genuinely popular Late Antique compilation: when Alexander is travelling at Lysou Limen in the course of his oriental travels, he comes to a temple where an old man with his face covered is within, and where there is an enormous golden vessel. Alexander tries to take it, till a divine voice restrains him. One is reminded of the unsuccessful claimants to the Graal, disqualified by their unworthiness.³⁶

None of the above 'manifestations' actually *explains* the Graal: rather do they illustrate still further the considerable flexibility of the concept itself, as well as the fact that like Gawain himself, the whole idea belongs to a chronologically very much earlier and wider area than the immediate Celtic predecessors of

Chrétien. But it does also belong culturally to the sort of storytelling they represent: not courtly, educated material in the first instance, but the sort of stratum of folk narrative into which much of Herodotus or the Welsh *Mabinogion* cycle very comfortably fits. And when we meet a Gauanes son of Temenos in early Macedonian foundation legend, we can reasonably look for further traces of Arthurian materials far earlier than the end of antiquity. We can also perhaps begin to account for why it should surface just at the point it does, at the beginning of the Dark Ages. This is the point when the conventional Graeco-Roman educational system loses its grip, and a more folkloric voice, rarely heard since Herodotus himself, has no longer any competitors for a hearing.

There are many other Graal manifestations in classical mythology itself: most obvious is the 'cauldron of renewal' theme manifested in the cauldron of Medea. There is an early tradition in a fragment of Hesiod that Medea was able to renew Aeson, father of Jason, in a golden *lebes* (cauldron);³⁷ the instance that tends to be cited is the case of her murdering his wicked brother Pelias in a vessel *misrepresented* as a cauldron of renewal. But we should at least pause over the nomenclature here. As is well known, the name Pelles persists in the Graal legends, with a prominent position in both *Perlesvaus* and the Prose Lancelot in the *Vulgate Cycle*.³⁸ He is usually the brother of the maimed king, and may be present in the Graal castle at the same time; in the medieval tradition he is virtuous and courteous, with however the scandal he contrives that Lancelot father Galahad on (Pelles') daughter Elaine (compare the stragem by which Aegeus is made to father Theseus by trickery).³⁹ If we are looking for Fisher-kings in the genealogy of Jason, then it is worth pointing out that Poseidon fathers Aeson on Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus, though Pelias, who ought to be the Fisher-king as distinct from the maimed king, is actually fathered by Kretheus and is thus Aeson's half-brother.⁴⁰ We should note that the Arthurian Pelles or his analogue Beli is sometimes presented as a dwarf; we should note that Pelias presides over Thessaly, the land of the Myrmidons (ant-men).⁴¹ And bronze bowls do figure further back in the family legend: Salmoneus had attached them to his chariot to imitate the thunder of Zeus, after which he was destroyed by Zeus' thunderbolt (cf. the fiery lance of the medieval maimings).⁴²

Other Graal-related materials

There are other classical traditions no less clearly in the right area, though often a good deal more elusive to interpret. Again we have only fragmentary evidence for Melampus: one of his unfailingly puzzling adventures is to be able to heal the wound of his maimed cousin Iphiclus, after the latter was reduced to impotence at the sight of a knife stuck in a tree when he was a child; Melampus has to put the rust of the knife in a liquid concoction and heal him of his impotence with that; one thinks of the maimed king being sustained by the

Graal, or cured by the touch of a weapon.⁴³ Indeed the theme of the wounder as healer does occur in several of the major Greek myths: Telephus King of Mysia has to beg Achilles to heal the wound that Achilles himself had earlier inflicted.⁴⁴

The most puzzling of these fugitive correspondences is that of Philoctetes. The standard picture in the Arthurian world is of a 'rich Fisher-king' waiting to be healed. One notes that Philoctetes actually presents this image despite himself: his name indicates 'love of gain', and he lies wounded of a noisome wound on Lemnos.⁴⁵ In Sophocles' version this is a barren island, but in the other dramatists it was inhabited; it is ultimately left to a pure young warrior to save him and bring him to healing at Troy.

The name Perdiccas already noted in Herodotus in itself has other associations that are relevant to any ancient Arthur. The name itself is a by-form of *perdix*, a partridge, with the following connotations: in Ovid there is an Athenian Perdix who invents a pair of compasses. It can hardly be coincidence that his claim to fame includes the same operations as those of Perdiccas – tracing a circle by inventing a pair of compasses.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, and perhaps still more significantly, the same Perdix is also credited with the invention of the potter's wheel,⁴⁷ and so with 'the ownership of the means of production' (as they say) of the first and all subsequent vessels. He discovers the Holy Graal of the Holy Graal, so to speak. The same figure is also known under another name Talos (long o); the only other Talos known is the Cretan bronze man – at first no connexion whatever, but also a description of a man in full armour apart from a single vulnerable spot.⁴⁸ We also have intriguing associations for a famous name that may offer a reduplicated form: Tantalus is usually shown as punished in a banquet where he is not allowed to eat, for betraying the secrets of the gods.⁴⁹ But we have a likewise late presentation in Philostratus of Tantalus as having a cup of immortality which he shares with mankind, to be worshipped by the Indians as a benefactor.⁵⁰ Once more it is unsurprising that Tantalus was localised as a Lydian ruler. We also find him falling from heaven, or being thrown out of heaven, and cast down into the underworld; he had dined with the gods and been found unworthy.⁵¹ Can we make any sense of all this?

Tantalus/Talos/Perdix/Perdiccas would correspond to the failed Graal Knight who occupies the perilous seat and falls through it to the region below; he has access to the cup of immortality; the casting down of Perdix by Daedalus may be a version of the same with a different gloss;⁵² and already in the Cretan Talos he seems to embody the idea of a man in full armour. Normally one thinks of the Tantalus as permanently punished in the other world for his oath-breaking over the possession of the golden dog, and for betraying the secrets of the gods and dispensing immortality. But there is a variant, and an oriental one, available from Late Antiquity: the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* offers the portrait of Tantalus as a benefactor of mankind, dispensing a cup of immortality. Indian brahmins living on top of a mist-wreathed hill like the Athenian

Acropolis tell Apollonius that 'Tantalus was a good man and gave his friends a share in the immortality given him by the gods'; and they point out an inscribed statue:

The statue was four cubits high, and resembled a man of fifty, and was dressed in the manner of the Argolid, but parted his cloak in Thessalian fashion, and he offered a toast from a cup sufficient for one thirsty man, and in it was a foaming liquid undiluted which did not bubble over the edge of the cup.⁵³

We are later told that the leading brahmin

first set an example to his fellow-drinkers by bending toward the cup, and it offered enough drink for all, for the stream copiously resupplied itself as if welling up with waters from a spring . . . they make out that the cup-bearer is Tantalus, since he seemed the most philanthropic of men.⁵⁴

Once more this has an air of a Graal-keeper tale about it.

We should also note the role of Tantalus as the father of Pelops, whom he sacrifices on a dish. The gods have Pelops reconstituted and so the dish is able to function as a dish of immortality. We have to compare the point in the Cistercian *Queste* narrative where Percival/Galahad has in front of him the bread which changes into the shape of a child on the plate.⁵⁵ We should also note that in the materials concerning the wheel of fortune, King Arthur seems to have a punishment that combines those of the mythical offenders Tantalus and Ixion: he is enjoying wine and golden fruit, and is then spun round on a wheel, with the presumed corollary that he can no longer pluck the fruit or drink the wine.⁵⁶

Such correspondences suggest here as elsewhere that the Greek world knew *some* kind of Graal tradition; and that once more its epicentre is early and in Asia. Whether Medea brought her golden cauldron among treasure plundered from her father Aietes, the source of the magic comes from there; Telephus of Mysia belongs to north-western Asia Minor, in the hinterland of Troy (though part of his complex life-story is enacted in Greece itself);⁵⁷ and Philoctetes' lair is likewise just off the north-west coast of Asia Minor, a stone's throw from Troy, and from the kingdom of Arduus himself. The problem is that instead of corresponding at sufficient points with the medieval legends, it seems to produce almost the same amount of confused variation again, and in precisely the parts of the Greek mythological repertoire which are least open to further exploration. But if nothing else it underlines the credibility of the material in Herodotus concerning the traditions of Lebaea. Unique among Greek historians, Herodotus is not only the father of history, but fittingly the first

and last historian in this world to claim to have seen with his own eyes an object – Gyges’ offering at Delphi – that might be claimed as at least an historical version of the Holy Graal.

There is yet another Graal personage to be considered. In the Cistercian *Queste* Text we have the image of the bread served by the Graal seeming to turn into a child, an image easily transmuted into that of the eucharist, with the child seen as Christ.⁵⁸ But we do have stories told of how Pelops is served to his father Tantalus in a meal; he is made whole again by regeneration from a cauldron.⁵⁹

‘From ritual to romance’

It is instructive to turn to the conclusions of Loomis’ study of the Graal phenomenon now nearly forty years old. The subtitle *From Celtic myth to Christian Symbol* well describes the picture that appeared to emerge from medieval texts alone: Loomis pointed to heroic tales in the Irish *Echtras* which are wholly secular in spirit and are gradually overlaid with an *interpretatio Christiana* all too apparent in the Vulgate *Queste* and *Perlesvaus*. Dark Age Celtic origins as such for the Graal materials cannot be sustained, but a good deal more can be salvaged: one notes that Loomis’ example from the *Echtras* is of a kingship quest, which is what is taking place both in the stories of Herodotus’ Perdiccas in Macedonia and in that of Gyges in Lydia. In Loomis’ example⁶⁰ the visit to the Otherworldly place is accompanied both by a maiden with a vessel and by a kingship prophecy – exactly what we should expect of Gyges’ embassy to Delphi.

We have found, then, that Nicolaus of Damascus and Herodotus between them have supplied us with three different accounts of elements in the Graal tradition – the youngest’s gaining of a supernaturally supplied golden cup, a miraculously enhanced meal, and a stone feature illumined by a beam of light – both the latter at Cauldron-town; and the appearance of an infirm host instructing the avenging of a murder in a Waste Land. Gauanes descendant of Temenos/Lot is present at the second of these events, Gyges great-nephew of an Arduus, the homonymn of Arduus greatest of knights, in the other. The Holy Graal and the Arduus-legend have joined in two different ways, in both Herodotus and probably Xanthus, at least as early as the fifth century BC. And the material is at least partly historical. If golden cups do not routinely fall from the sky, socially mobile young men are perfectly capable of describing stone circles on sunlit floors.

Once more an exploration of Lydian geography yields interesting, if inconclusive, results in this domain. We might note that Strabo briefly mentions, with unconcealed disapproval, reports of a festival of Artemis outside Sardis ‘where the baskets (*kiathoi*) are said to dance’. It is not entirely clear what this means: but it could certainly be interpreted as supporting the myth of a vessel floating in mid-air, even if the medieval sources do not seem to present

the Graal as actually dancing. A *kiathos* would be odd applied to a metal or stone object, but would reasonably represent a broad, shallow platter.

Lastly, we might note that even Arcadia has its Graal castle site. The place in question is Phigalia, mentioned in some detail by Pausanias,⁶¹ who notes that in the time of one Boukolion it was renamed Phiale, and that the name was changed back. The epigraphic and literary picture is not quite so simple; but in the form Phialia the connexion would easily be made with a cup or vessel (*phiale*). Mysteries of Demeter were once more celebrated nearby, and the cult of the Black Demeter was located here, with her symbols of both dolphin and dove, and a hybrid form which Frazer himself casually described in terms of 'The Lady of the Lake'. The site itself is on high ground, and surrounded by mountains, and would well merit the kind of description applied to Graal Castles.⁶² And Arcadia also had its own Waste region, described as such in Pausanias.⁶³

Conclusion

We are in a position, then, to look back at a wide range of ancient analogues for the Graal material. The presence of Gauanes makes the evidence in Herodotus hard to ignore, and the context among Lydian Ardu-material does the same for the episode in Nicolaus. In many of the other cases we should wish to know much more than we do about the broader mythological context of figures as mysterious and elusive as Melampus, Philoctetes, Pelias or Tantalus. But even without such knowledge it is unwise to think of the Graal as a distinctively medieval phenomenon. We should bear in mind too the fact that Pelops, son of the Lydian Tantalus, travels to Greece to give his name and legend to the Peloponnese, just as the similarly dismembered Arkas gives his to Arcadia. In the world of myth the places of our two Arthur-figures are connected.

TRISTAN AND THRAETAONA: THE TRISTAN LEGEND IN THE EAST

It is generally taken for granted that the Tristan story, whether or not clearly joined to that of Arthur, belongs to the Celtic West.¹ The name itself has been convincingly related to the Drystan ap Tallych of the Welsh Triads, where his name is associated with March and Essyllt.² And a close analogue of the story itself is to be found in the love-triangle between Finn, his wife Gráinne and the hero Dairmuid.³ The story of the two tragic lovers Tristan and Iseult, locked together by the love-potion, and constantly prised apart by the lady's royal husband, is strongly associated throughout the later Middle Ages with the place-names of Cornwall;⁴ and the whole picture is well supported by non-Arthurian analogues in Celtic folk-literature. But all this can only be made to prove that the story was well established in Celtic quarters in the early Middle Ages and beyond. But a considerable amount of oriental matter has been noticed in the tale as well,⁵ and two challenges have modified the picture further. A study by Eisner in 1969 argued strongly that a number of motifs in the tales from classical mythology had found their way into the Tristan tradition, including the motif of the black and white sail, from the Theseus cycle, and the healing of Paris by Oenone.⁶ The postulated source of the 'borrowed' material was felt to be the literate and educated monks of St Columba's foundation at Iona.⁷

A further parallel was offered in the nineteenth century, but appears to have escaped the notice of most Western scholars in the twentieth:⁸ there is a fully worked and highly rhetorical analogue to the story in the twelfth-century Georgian romance of *Vis and Ramin*, translated from a Pahlavi original,⁹ and represented also in an eleventh-century Persian version by Gurgani.¹⁰ The essential love-triangle is the same, with the king's relationship with his bride compromised by magical means, and a prolonged romance and intrigue between the queen and a member of his court.

The similarity of outline between these medieval texts is immediately apparent:

Tristan

hero is king Mark's nephew

marriage is compromised by means outside the couple's control: nurse has given hero and heroine a love potion

Mark finds out their love

Mark demands an oath from Isolde

parted from Isolde, Tristan turns to Isolde of the White Hands, but remains loyal to Mark's Isolde

Vis and Ramin

hero is king Moabad's younger brother¹¹

marriage is compromised by means outside the couple's control: nurse has rendered the king impotent by a talisman¹²

Moabad finds out the love of Vis and Ramin

Moabad demands an oath from Vis

parted from Vis, Ramin turns to Gul, but remains loyal to Vis

The stories diverge substantially only just before the end: whereas the Tristan story ends with Tristan's death of a poisonous wound, followed by Isolde's death of a broken heart at not arriving in time, the Eastern version is happy: Moabad is defeated, then killed by a boar, and the couple live happily ever after to a great age. The Georgian version was traditionally supposed to have been translated in the reign of Queen Tamar and was already known to the poet Rustaveli (fl. 1200 AD); but as the Persian version of Gurgani dates from the previous century, and is thus considerably earlier than the late twelfth century, this version of the story must predate the flourishing of the Tristan industry in the West. It is therefore natural to look for any Eastern predecessor of the story even earlier.¹³ Two very distinctive motifs are to be seen in the Western Tristan texts, beyond the royal love-triangle. The hero slays a dragon and the king himself has the strange physical peculiarity of horse's ears. In the tenth-century Persian *Shah-Nama* similar characteristics appear, once more in a story of young lovers in a royal triangle: the Persian hero-king Feridun gains the throne after defeating a king Zahak (Kerem) with the similar peculiarity of black snakes growing from his shoulders, and takes advantage of his access to the palace to lay hands on the king's concubines.¹⁴ Persian philologists¹⁵ have noted that this dragon-slaying Feridun is a middle Persian form of the more ancient Thraetaona of the Old Zoroastrian *Yashts*: the two heroes are analogous in name as well as achievements, and Thraetaona is of ancient (though imprecise) date.¹⁶ Nor is that all. It has been suggested since the late eighteenth century that Thraetaona/Feridun/Hrudan has been Hellenised as (h)Rhodanes in a Greek account of ancient Babylonian legend in the *Babyloniaca* of Iamblichus;¹⁷ while the title associating Zahak with the snakes (Kerem) has been Hellenised as Garmus.¹⁸

Rhodanes and Tristan

This novel of Iamblichus, dating quite precisely from the later second century AD, adds the prospect of an entirely new text for the Tristan legend. The text itself has been lost but for a meagre collection of fragments; but a summary was made by the ninth-century patriarch Photius in sufficient detail to allow us to check whether or not Rhodanes does embody the legend of Thraetaona/Feridun. To the best of my knowledge this connexion has not been used to effect a comparison between Iamblichus and the Tristan story, and the text of Photius' summary is accordingly translated here as Appendix 5. The name Sinonis is not so readily evident as Thraetaona/Tristan. But we might note a vernacular form of Isolda, Isonde in English and Scandinavian versions, and this would at least be comparable to the Greek oblique case stem which would offer an accusative Sinonida. Such an equation can be accepted only if the connection Thraetaona/Tristan is sound both in derivation and in the congruence of their respective tales. But if that is the case, then Tristan and Isolde/Isonde are Hrodan/Rhodanes and Sinonis/*Sinonda.

The comparable parts of the story are as follows:

<i>Rhodanes and Sinonis</i>	<i>Tristan</i>
Rivalry of Garmus and Rhodanes for the hand of Sinonis	Rivalry of Tristan and Marc for the hand of Isolde
Rhodanes threatened with crucifixion	Tristan about to be burned
lovers flee together	lovers flee together
shepherds divulge their whereabouts	shepherds divulge their whereabouts
lovers hide in cave ¹⁹	lovers pursued to cave
poisoned (by venomous honey)	Tristan poisoned by arrow
offerings laid beside sleeping lovers	King Marc lays glove by sleeping Isolde
lovers sleeping in grave mistaken for dead	Tristan pretends death and walks with his own cortege (<i>Tristan als Mönch</i>)
story of oath: at temple of Aphrodite women must confess their dreams (digression)	Isolde's oath: she must swear her fidelity over relics

continued

Rhodanes and Sinonis

Tristan

girl Mesopotamia living across
water takes Sinonis' name

Tristan marries a second girl called
Isolde who lives overseas

evil custom of Queen Berenike

evil custom of the land of felons
(Prose Tristan); of the castrating
queen (White Russian Tristan)

It seems clear enough that the heroes Tristan and Thraetaona/Feridun/Rhodanes are indeed undergoing the same sequence of adventures, as the similarity of their names might lead us to expect; though the natural process of variation and certain cultural differences produce different ways of telling the same thing. The relationship between the male members of the triangle is variable (and not wholly essential): Rhodanes and Sinonis seem to be enjoying a relationship similar to the Irish pair Diarmaid and Gráinne, where the widower Finn fails in his bid to marry Gráinne, and she elopes with Diarmaid instead;²⁰ so Sinonis avoids marriage with the widowed Garmus and is either married or engaged to Rhodanes. There are also other motifs in common, not supplied in the same place: mention is made in both traditions of a feature associated with a lion (a stele in Iamblichus, a lion fountain in the Prose Tristan);²¹ both contain what amounts to a quarrel over a beauty contest, and the motif of a lock of the heroine's hair sent to the king. But, above all, both contain the love-potion. This is the mainspring of the Tristan story; in Iamblichus it is slipped in as a digression, when the eunuch Zobares falls in love with Mesopotamia, the doublet of the heroine Sinonis, as a result of drinking from an erotic river.²² The couple themselves actually imbibe a drug that is not what it seems, but this is simply to save them from suicide. It may be that cultural preference encouraged removal of the love-potion to a subplot. Greek readership seems to prefer lovers who love of their own free will rather than chemical compulsion.

It should however be noted that Thraetaona was singled out as one of the first Persian heroes to be associated with the fabulous *baoma* juice with its intoxicating properties:²³ once more we seem to be approaching the association of a Tristan-type hero and a powerful and overmastering potion. Once we add the further similarity of names, it is very difficult to explain the resemblances except by Eastern and Western traditions of one and the same story.

Moreover, a closer examination of the names of Tristan's enemies offers an important detail. King Mark has horse's ears – as would any Celtic king whose name is simply the appropriate word for horse (*marc*). Sceptics might argue that in the story of Feridun and Zahak not all snakes growing from the shoulders of the hero's enemy will spring directly upward so as to resemble horse's ears, as I have suggested in the case of Zahak/Kerem/Garmus. No variant of this name is ever actually applied to Mark himself. But it most certainly

is applied to Tristan's *other* enemy, the King of Ireland: in Gottfried he is called Gurmun (cf. Garmus), and is of African extraction.²⁴ If the doublet Gurmun/Garmus were to be dismissed as coincidence, the version of it in the Prose Tristan cannot be. There the king is called Anguin, clearly a Latin translation of a name for 'snake'. The Prose Tristan must have drawn on a Latin version of the story which has not attempted to transcribe the name Gurmun/Garmus/Kerem, but has actually managed to translate it into Latin as the language of one particular storyteller in the tradition underlying part of the Prose Tristan. Again sceptics might argue that this is the wrong enemy of Tristan, who offers him no opposition after the initial episodes, and that he is not a rival for Isolde, who is in fact his daughter. This is indeed the case; but in Gottfried Isolde's mother is also called Isolde and is married to Gurmun/Anguin. This means that any confusion of the two Isoldes will once more give the Tristan figure a dragon king as his rival in love.

We should note a number of points of contact between Vis and Ramin and Rhodanes and Sinonis, beyond the happy ending:

Iamblichus

Vis and Ramin

love rivals compared to two bulls

lover Ramin compared to bull

Chaldaean prophet says Rhodanes will be king

wise man Bego says Ramin will be king

Rhodanes' supporters able to use buried gold to hire wild mercenaries to overthrow Garmus

Ramin uses gold from Moabad's family treasury to hire wild mercenaries to overthrow Moabad

Once more we should be left in no doubt of the parallel traditions in East and West.

An ancient Tristan narrative

With the basic relationships established, we are now in a position to look in some more detail at the way the ancient Tristan was handled in comparison with its Medieval analogues both East and West. The most convenient way of presenting the comparisons is episode by episode in the logical progression of the story as familiar from the Western Tristan tellings. There are several divergent Western traditions, the story in Gottfried and Thomas representing a more sophisticated and ambitious approach than the spontaneous and folktale-like Béroul; the later Prose Tristan contains a great deal of material not found elsewhere, but comparison with Iamblichus will suggest that many of the additional details can themselves no longer be regarded as late.

The background of Tristan is offered in divergent versions in the Western

versions: Gottfried has Tristan as Mark's nephew, as the son of Mark's sister Blanchefleur by her knightly husband Rivalin; she dies in childbirth and Rivalin himself dies in battle: Tristan has an eventful abduction by merchants and setting down in Cornwall; a completely different prelude is supplied by the Prose Tristan, where again his mother Elyabel dies in childbirth, having been abandoned by his father King Meliadus, now in the clutches of an enchantress; the prophet Merlin in the Prose Tristan already announces Tristan's greatness. A Chaldaean announces the future success of Rhodanes, but not until much later in the story. The *Shah-Nama* has Feridun's overthrow of Zahak proclaimed to the latter in a dream; as the son of Abtin, murdered by Zahak while his mother and he are driven into exile. Western versions differ considerably in the degree of hostility to Tristan both by Mark and by a foster-mother.

We have noted Thraetaona's role in the *Yasbts* as a dragon-slayer; this is how Tristan's reputation is established, in conjunction with the slaying of Morholt. The rest of the oriental tradition is more muted. In the *Shah-Nama* the dragon is really identical with Zahak himself, for reasons that will appear below. The *Visramiani* contents itself with mere military and so realistic exploits. *Diarmaid and Gráinne* and the Persian Ardashir-legend cope with a monster in a reported digression, again ensuring the relative realism of the rest of the tale.

* * *

At the point where Photius' summary of Iamblichus begins, the hostility between Rhodanes and King Garmus has already begun. Iamblichus differs in his handling of Rhodanes from the *Shah-Nama*, the *Visramiani* and the Western Tristans, in having Rhodanes apparently lawfully married to Sinonis; this means that the king is the would-be adulterer, and so the whole point of the love-potion, to make the lovers technically innocent of adultery, is not required. This, it should be noted, is also the initial triangle as presented in *Diarmaid and Gráinne*, and will not be the only detail in which Iamblichus is closest to the Tristan analogues rather than the Tristan Vulgate. This need not have been the original plot, however: chastity or marital propriety is a convention of the Greek novel, and may be a modification by Iamblichus for the taste of his readers; though of course that is no proof that this important variation was not in his oriental source as well. The *Shah-Nama* version has a very different presentation of Feridun: the hero is at this point an honoured guest in the house of Zahak, and his liberties with the royal concubines are reported to the king by a courtier:

'I hear you', retorted Kondrow. 'Now listen to what I have to say. If this renowned warrior is your guest, what business has he in the women's quarters? There he sits with Jamshid's sisters, discussing every kind of topic with them, with one hand fondling the cheeks of

Sharnahz, the other the red lips of Arnavaz. When the night grows dark his conduct is even worse. . . . Now, my lord, make your plans and look to what needs to be done.'

This corresponds to the scenes in the Tristan texts where the barons inform the king of Tristan's misconduct with the queen and demand action. At this point in Béroul there is a brief digression on King Mark's secret: he has horse's ears, and the evil dwarf Frocin divulges the secret to a thorn-hedge, and hence to the listening barons. The analogy has been correctly drawn to the Asiatic Midas story known as early as Classical Antiquity. Just as Frocin is killed for his betrayal, Midas takes the precaution of executing the barbers who are privy to the royal shame. It is generally thought that the episode was simply imported into the story because the word 'marc' in Celtic languages means horse. But the *Shah-Nama* makes it clear that Feridun's enemy Zahak has two dragons growing from his shoulders, which might of course present an identical visual effect.

Punishment is now threatened for the lovers. The Tristan texts have the queen to be burned; Tristan escapes and then rescues the queen from the commuted fate of being handed over to lepers; in Iamblichus Sinon is imprisoned, while Rhodanes is to be crucified; Sinon somehow intercedes for Rhodanes, and the couple are able to flee. In the Prose Tristan King Mark asks four innocent shepherds where the couple are; Iamblichus has shepherds disclose their whereabouts under torture after betrayal by a fisherman.²⁵ The traditions diverge considerably on the hideout: Iamblichus has an extensive cave, betrayed as hollow by a falling shield; Béroul opts for an open-air hideout in the forest; Gottfried for a cave in which a kind of shrine of courtly love is incorporated. This latter detail does not occur in Iamblichus at this stage, but we hear not long afterwards of a temple of Aphrodite on an island which later forms the focus of a complex of incidents. The Prose Tristan has a magically hidden house beside a rock in the forest.²⁶

Iamblichus has the couple poisoned and incapacitated at this point by poisoned honey from bees; the Prose Tristan opts for the poisoning of Tristan by an arrow somewhat later. In the Western versions, Mark discovers the lovers, by looking into the cave or seeing them lying asleep in the open air; he mistakes the couple for innocent, shields Isolda from the sunlight (Gottfried) and leaves a recognition-token. In Iamblichus the pursuers mistake the ailing couple for dead, cover them, and leave funeral offerings. A rare item in the Tristan canon presents this situation in a slightly more folkloric form: in *Tristan als Mönch* the hero disguises as a monk and escorts his own funeral cortège in order to return to Isolda.²⁷ Next in Iamblichus the lovers occupy a maiden's tomb (she had wrongly been pronounced dead); in the Prose Tristan the house in the wood itself belonged to a long-dead maiden.²⁸ Throughout this episode in particular we have the strong sense that the tradition overall is very fluid, each author going his own way through the maze.

While the lovers are in the wild Isolde has a dream in which she sees the love-conflict in animal terms: Tristan and Mark are two lions.²⁹ In the oriental tradition we have variants of this: Sinon is dreams that she is being pursued by a bull and goat; while Moabad listens to a minstrel singing of a bull, a spring and a tree;³⁰ in the *Shah-Nama* the animal imagery is represented by a different route: Feridun has a mace forged in the image of a buffalo's head.³¹

Also while in the wild, the lovers encounter the hermit Ogrin, who urges repentance for the acts of the potion, now in Béroul worn off.³² The oriental tradition has a corresponding figure: a Chaldean appears in Iamblichus, but only to prophesy the future of Rhodanes; likewise in the *Visramiani* a soothsayer Behroz, conveniently recalling the famous ancient Chaldean Berossus of Babylon, and a wise man Bego, fulfil the prophetic role.³³ It will be remembered that Merlin himself functions in the Prose Tristan, at a much earlier point.

Rhodanes and Sinon is journey to an island where there is a temple of Aphrodite, whose custom is described.³⁴ It is where a woman is forced to disclose the contents of her dreams truthfully – and so where it would be inevitable to admit any sexual guilt. Sinon is has nothing to hide, but the Tristan tradition places Iseult's ambiguous oath at this point: King Mark will believe her innocence only if she takes an oath by holy relics that she has not slept with Tristan – an oath taken successfully because of trick wording, as she alludes to close proximity to a pilgrim or leper who has carried her across a stream and who is Tristan in disguise.³⁵ There is thus no special cause for the mention of this feature in Iamblichus at all; but it may have been needed in a version of the story where Tristan and his lover were adulterous, as in the version of Feridun's conduct in the *Shah-Nama*. The *Visramiani* likewise includes an oath which Vis has to swear.³⁶ There is further variation: instead of an oath-swearing ceremony, Iamblichus includes at this point a digression on a contest between three suitors for the favour of Mesopotamia, who has given a cup to one, a chaplet to a second, a kiss to a third.³⁷ There are similar arbitrations in the Prose Tristan, where Sir Lamorat and Sir Driant debate whether the Queen of Orkney is more beautiful than Iseult, and Lamorat and Meleagant debate whether the same woman is more beautiful than Guinevere.³⁸ Once more it is hasty to assume that the prose Tristan is simply digressing for its own sake: we have the possibility once more of some kind of traditional set piece.

Apart from the temple, the island also introduces two brothers Tigris and Euphrates and their sister Mesopotamia, whom one of the brothers when captured passes off as Sinon is herself.³⁹ The confusion of another woman with Sinon is suggests an alternative way of working the doublet between Isolde and 'Isolde of the White Hands'; the *Visramiani* opts for a slightly different approach again, an unconsummated relationship with another woman, but not one with the same name. One of the brothers is similarly taken for Tristan; one notes in the dragon-slaying folktale elements where a twin brother (impeccably

faithful) stands in for the hero. One notes too that in Thomas Tristan meets his death while helping a 'dwarf-Tristan' – yet another way of expressing the presence of a doublet figure in the tradition.⁴⁰

There is a link between several adventures of Mesopotamia and Isolde's confidant and maid Brangain. The latter acts as a substitute for Isolde, yielding her virginity to Mark in place of her mistress; much less distinctively, Mesopotamia is simply mistaken for Sinonis.⁴¹ But Brangain is also on the receiving end of the affections of Caherdin, whom she at first refuses with an immobilising potion; Mesopotamia cannot fulfil the passion of Zobaras, magically in love with her but a eunuch.⁴² She is to be executed by Zobaras; Brangain is similarly led to execution but spared because of her entreaties.

A further common element occurs in the roles of Gandin and Cariado, who in Gottfried act as further wooers for Isolde in separate episodes: the counterpart in Iamblichus is Setapus, 'a rich man of dissolute character';⁴³ Tristan kills Cariado, while Setapus is inebriated and killed by Sinonis.

The Western versions concur in contriving the death of Tristan and Isolda for love, with the motif of the twining branches over the couple's grave.⁴⁴ The Eastern texts however opt for a completely different ending, and one where Iamblichus and the *Visramiani* concur in unusual detail. Rhodanes had discovered gold at the beginning of the story, and by his disclosing the site to Soraechus the latter is able to raise a revolt by Alan mercenaries against Garmus, forced in turn to engage Rhodanes as his general.⁴⁵ Similarly in the *Visramiani* Ramin is able to conquer Moabad by means of mercenaries.⁴⁶ There may be also a survival of the material in the Prose Tristan, where in an apparently irrelevant episode Tristan is shipwrecked in a land of servitude which he frees before returning to Cornwall.⁴⁷ The *Shah-Nama* opts for a different solution again: a heroic combat in which Feridun defeats Zahak, but is forbidden by angelic intervention from actually killing him.⁴⁸

What, then, are we to make of the Tristan stories overall? It is clear that the basic core of the story is the same East and West: a love triangle involving a king and his beloved's true love, and their pursuit to a hideout; and their escape and confusion of the heroine with another woman. If this is argued as banal and not specific enough, we cannot attribute the king's horse ears or snake shoulders to coincidence, nor the preservation of some variant of the name Tristan for the hero. The surprise must be rather that the texts have not diverged a great deal further than they have actually done. Moreover, incidental details like the lion landmark, the beauty contest and the wicked custom are a reminder that the Prose Tristan and other pieces are actually drawing on materials that were associated with the complex as early as Antiquity – and pre-Classical Antiquity at that, since there is no reason to disbelieve Iamblichus' claims to be translating from an older pre-classical source in some non-classical Near-Eastern language.⁴⁹ The analogues which Eisner attributed to learned Medieval imitation of classical literature ought also to be called into question: we may once more be dealing with much older material which has infiltrated

the standard classical materials at a much earlier stage: we ought to take a closer look at the love-triangle of Paris, Menelaus and Helen.

The identification of an early oriental Tristan tale does not automatically point to an early King Arthur. We note of course the guest appearances in the Tristan canon of Arthur, as when he oversees the administration of Isolde's equivocal oath;⁵⁰ or much less plausibly in the Prose Tristan where the king is hopelessly lost in a wood from which it is Tristan's function to extricate him.⁵¹ But there is one distant Arthurian echo in Iamblichus. When we are told of the rival claims of Mesopotamia's lovers we are told that the judge in their contest is one Bokchoris, not only here featuring as a just king.⁵² We note the occasional spelling of Sir Bors as Boort or Bohors, of which Iamblichus' name simply reinforces the intervocalic aspiration. We must now begin to look for Arthurian themes and names in their own right; but with the assurance that an early oriental Tristan tradition will be extremely difficult to dismiss or explain away.

How, then, do we view our first Tristan text? It is closer in style to Gottfried than to any other version, as we should expect from the rhetorical training of a second sophistic author;⁵³ though in incident-pattern it is nearer to the inclusiveness of the Prose Tristan, given to quite substantial accumulation of digression and minor incident. It is, however, more dramatically taut and compacted than the latter text, where a number of shorter episodes are self-contained. The double-identity confusions in Iamblichus are carefully planned and plotted. There are traces of the folk-humour found in Bérout or the *Folie* and *Mönch* texts; but the dragon-slayer and giant-killing features are already trimmed down. It is also clear that Iamblichus is sometimes closer to the Tristan analogues (the Diarmaid complex, the *Visramiani*) than to the closely congruent details of the Western Vulgate.

Overall the relative strangeness of this version should not surprise us. Not only is it a thousand years older and the product of a somewhat different society; but the Tristan legend has a considerable variety of episodes not found in the Vulgate: these include the *Lay of the Honeysuckle* and a small number of episodes thrown up by the later European vernaculars.⁵⁴ Iamblichus' version differs as much from the other two Eastern texts, round Feridun and Ramin, as they do from each other. The analogue with Paris below shows that the story was found very early in the Eastern Mediterranean in its Western tragic version. Some scenes are not paralleled elsewhere, such as those concerning the executioner, at least as reported by Iamblichus; or the death of the informer thrown by the camel;⁵⁵ and the bizarre and distasteful story of Trophime and the dog.⁵⁶

A classical Tristan-scenario: Paris-Menelaus-Helen?

There is no shortage of allusions in classical literature to names and materials which turn up in the medieval Arthurian corpus from time to time. The normal

explanation is that these are due to learned borrowing, but in view of the foregoing chapters we should keep an open mind about what may just as easily be borrowings from a common and relatively primitive oral storytelling tradition. Clearly when classical names are being used as namedrops in a text with a generally erudite, rhetorical feel, the explanation may be different from what we expect in the case of an isolated name or motif that seems integral to a story as a whole.⁵⁷ There is an explanation for why this field has not been thoroughly explored in the past. Classical literature has been accessible to Arthurian scholars through the medium of handbooks which offer 'averaged' versions of the principal legendary material:⁵⁸ unusual, fragmentary, lost or subliterate variants are likely to be ignored. Correspondingly, scholars are inclined to view medieval materials bearing classical or other exotic names as garble or caricature of their character in classical literature.⁵⁹

The most important analogue for the Tristan legend in classical literature is the story of Paris and Helen. Details of this story have been singled out as contributions to the British tale, and Eisner argued for learned borrowing of the motif of the discarded lover needed to heal the wounded warrior.⁶⁰ This is indeed typical of the Tristan tradition: he needs Isolde to heal his poisoned wound; so Paris, wounded by the bow of Philoctetes, needs the ministrations of his first love Oenone, whom he is supposed to have left for Helen.⁶¹ What has not evidently been realised is that Paris' whole career offers important parallels to that of Tristan at a more general level.

<i>Paris</i> ⁶²	<i>Tristan</i> ⁶³
exposed infant	exposed infant
returns to be acknowledged as prince	returns to be acknowledged as prince
falls in love with wife of his host	falls in love with wife of his host
shares drinking-cup with amorous intent	shares the love-potion
they elope and consummate at Cranae; Paris builds temple of love	they elope and find temple of love
they steal treasure	they steal treasure (Vis and Ramin, cf. Iamblichus)
host has horse connexion: swears on cut-up horse	host has horse connexion: has horse's ears

continued

Paris

hero has enemy Palamedes, whom
he kills with an arrow

he has association also with a double
of the adulterous wife

he dies when his former love does
not heal him in time of a poisoned
wound

Tristan

hero has enemy Sir Palomedes,
whom he kills

he has association also with a double
of the adulterous wife

he dies when his former love does
not heal him in time of a poisoned
wound

The Paris of the *Iliad* or the 'Judgement of Paris' does not provide this profile: it has to be pieced together from a variety of sources, most interestingly the post-Homeric tradition culminating in Euripides' *Helen* that there were two Helens (one a mere *eidolon*), just as there are two Isoldes.⁶⁴ But altogether the essentials come very close: notably the business of the loving-cup (Ovid, *Heroides* 17.79f):

*et modo suspiras, modo pocula proxima nobis
sumis, quaque bibi, tu quoque parte bibis.*

and at one moment you sigh, at another you take the cup next to me
and drink from the same part of the cup as I drank.

It is true that many of the parallel sections are presented in the ancient and Medieval traditions with a very different slant, including the love-potion above; but amid so much that is fluid or uncertain in literary relationships this group of parallels stands out as one of the strongest, and probabilities are cemented into certainty by the hero's having killed Palamedes.⁶⁵ There is also the not fully explained connexion between the rival king and horses. We should note that *both* Helen and Oenone have potion connexions: Helen had a reputation for skill in drugs,⁶⁶ while Oenone's actual name itself connects here with *oinos*, wine. We should be tempted to see Paris as a Tristan by another name, still closer to the Lydian epicentre of other Arthurian materials than the Iranian connexions of Iamblichus. The Paris traditions are of course traditionally much older than the world of Arduus of Lydia and Gyges, belonging as they do to late Mycenaean legend; but they are *also* relatively local: the Hellespont is just over 400 miles from Sardis.

The plot of Cligès

One further unusual exhibit should also be discussed at this point: the case of Chrétien de Troyes' Romance *Cligès*.⁶⁷ The nearest plot to this ensemble is that

of Tristan: it concerns a love-triangle between the hero Cligès, son of Alexander the Great (!), Alexander's brother Alis, Emperor of Greece, and a girl Fenice. The Emperor marries her, breaking an oath to the late Alexander that he will remain celibate to ensure the succession of Cligès at Constantinople: Cligès for his part actually helps him against a counter-claimant the Duke of Saxony. But the girl loves Cligès and has her nurse prepare the king a potion which will give him the impression he is sleeping with Fenice, while she actually remains a virgin. She then pretends death to avert suspicion, and she and Cligès spend their time as lovers in a deserted hideaway. They are eventually betrayed; but the Emperor this time dies of grief and madness, leaving Cligès free to succeed rightfully to the Empire at Constantinople, and of course to marry Fenice herself.

This is an ingenious variation, or yet another variant, of the Tristan story itself.⁶⁸ As in *Vis and Ramin*, the magic is different again. The Emperor has wronged Cligès over his inheritance and had no right to marry: therefore the deceit with the potion is entirely legitimate, as well as harmless; and Fenice explicitly opted for pretended death sooner than enjoy the scandalous reputation of Isolde. A particular interest of the story's handling is that it precedes any of the traditional western Tristans, and it has a (rather lamely contrived) happy ending: there is no need of Alan mercenaries or discovery of buried treasure as there is in Iamblichus: the Emperor rival simply dies, and that is that. Further interest lies in names and setting: the epicentre is firmly the Greece of the Byzantine Empire; the betrayer who sees the naked lovers is a Thracian; and the girl has a name that would relate her to Phoenicia (Fenice). It is as if we are back in the world of the Greek novel, a notion confirmed by the texture of the florid erotic rhetoric.⁶⁹

We also have a link between the couple and Alexander the Great, and a Thessalian nurse. We should ask whether we are dealing with a merely mechanical transfer by a French author from his familiar Arthurian setting to something which from a French point of view might have been felt as more exotic. Chrétien's preface purports to shed light, but whether we believe him is another matter:

This story that I wish to tell and pass on to you we find written down in one of the books in the library of my Lord Saint Peter at Beauvais. That was the source of the tale which Chrétien turned into this romance. The book that is the authority for the truth of this story is very ancient, which makes it all the more worthy of belief.⁷⁰

This claim may be one of the typical corroborative fakes intended to lend a spurious authenticity to a tale Chrétien invents on his own account, as a possible protest against a telling he himself has undertaken, and which is now lost, of the Tristan story; but the emergence of a genuinely ancient Tristan in Iamblichus should act as a serious warning against the cavalier assumption that

every fictional writer who names an authority is automatically assumed to be a hoaxer till proven otherwise. We may be dealing rather with a Greek novel plot translated in Late Antiquity into Latin and finding its way to Chrétien from there. The scene where the physicians try to find signs of life in the body of Fenice should be compared with the revival scene in the Latin novel *Apollonius of Tyre*,⁷¹ which probably underwent precisely this pattern of transmission, and despite poor plot and execution went on to become a 'bestseller' among the ancient romances in the medieval world.

There should be special interest in the means of the potion in the Cligès story: it comes close to that in the 'false Helen' story attached to Paris and Helen since at least Euripides:⁷² the idea that Helen was pure and innocent, as Paris was made by the gods to embrace a mere cloud-image of Helen which disappears only when Menelaus is ready to reclaim the real one.⁷³ Nor do the connexions end there: it may be that the original Alexander father of Cligès was not Alexander the Great but the Alexandros of Troy, the Homeric name for Paris, easily confused with 'the' Alexander at any point in the transmission of the story. We should also note the importance of a pretended death scene (of Menelaus, not Helen) in the same play of Euripides.⁷⁴

Conclusion

We are now ready to conclude that romances of the Tristan variety, of a royal triangle and pursuit, are indeed ancient, and that the sometimes contested relationship of Vis and Ramin and Tristan and Isolde is a real one. It is unsurprising that our example is found set in Babylon when we have already noticed our earliest 'Bear's Son' materials centre on Athwyas and Thraetaona in an ancient Iranian context. We are entitled to suspect that Scott Littleton was searching in the right area, even if we have to revise our view of the transmission of such stories. We must also conclude that not only was there Arthurian material in Asia Minor, but that the Tristan and Arthur materials were intertwined long before the Middle Ages.

SIX ARTHURS IN SEARCH OF A CHARACTER

At the beginning of his first excursion into Arthurian Romance, Roger Sherlaw Loomis evoked a picture of medieval crusading knights biding their time en route to the Holy Land, listening in some Italian baronial hall to a Breton *conteur* telling the kind of story about the abduction of Guinevere that soon found expression in stone on the archivolt of the cathedral at Modena, with the names of Arthur, Gawain and others clearly picked out.¹ The implication was that that sort of performance offered the social context in which we most naturally imagine the propagation and transmission of material about King Arthur.

In the light of the foregoing chapters we could evoke a less familiar but still better authenticated scenario, some fourteen centuries earlier, where a character Arcturus dressed in some sort of star-adorned costume comes on stage and boasts to a Roman Republican audience at a rough-and-ready rustic comic farce shortly after the Second Punic War that he is an agent of Jupiter who has just sent a storm at sea to rescue two damsels in distress from an evil brothel-keeper. We are also told that this is an adaptation of a Greek play from several centuries earlier still.² 'Arthur the god' was in his heyday when Loomis wrote in the 1920s; Arthur the *deus ex machina* is unheard of to this day. Loomis went on to reclaim Arthur for the Celts, and for a mythology which he was quick to relate to the Persephone myth.³ We should now ask ourselves how much perceptions have changed in the light of intervening evidence.

The sort of challenge that Loomis' picture had to face was that of a sub-Roman Dark Age Warlord maintaining a precarious British identity in politically unstable conditions, holding hill-forts with wooden defences against Saxon incursions, and with any luck avoiding the moanings of a Gildas who wished to look back to happier days. But this picture of Arthur must now itself give way before an Arthur much earlier and more in tune with the wildest inventions of the romances and the crudest 'cultural heroics' of the earliest Celtic material. We now have an Arthur capable of rescuing tree-maidens from floods, avoiding total annihilation in sacrifice, capable of being katasterised and still continuing after a number of liaisons to father dynasties in Arcadia – or make carts and run hostels in Lydia. And we have an Arthur never too far

from animal roots, as a bear's son, as a werewolf's grandson, sleeping with a golden dove, and fighting alongside a hawkperson and a partridge; and an Arthur never too far either from flood precautions and agricultural clearances; nor from circular objects of some description, whether compass-drawn circles, celestial orbits, cartwheels, and people with 'circular' names, such as Mulos ('Mill-wheel') or Gongullos ('Round'), both of whom figure in the genealogies of his lovers. Most insistently, an Arthur whose career was associated with a primitive Pelasgian Arcadia with places with names like Table, Cup, Waste, and corresponding rainmaking ceremonial . . . and a cult of Demeter whose myth well embodies a good deal of the most familiar Arthurian mythology. And we have an Arthur whose identity can be reinforced by association with persons such as Gauanes, Kadus and Meles.

We are now in a position to stand back from our texts and see what appears to be at our disposal from our accessing of Graeco-Oriental sources. We seem to have more than one much older King Arthur figure, complete with Arthur or Arthur-related name and status. The most interesting impression to this author is that we are actually no nearer to establishing a *single* historical or legendary Arthur, or indeed to deciding the exact way a legendary one could have come about: when we look at historical, legendary and semi-legendary material in the Eastern Mediterranean in the seventh century BC, we arrive at impasses similar to those encountered in the Britain of the fifth and sixth centuries AD. We may have shifted the time and the place, but we have shifted a good many of the problems as well, as routinely happens when scholars proclaim 'new' Arthurs. But that is no excuse for not making an attempt, and it has to be said that both in Arkas/Arktouros of Arcadia and in Arduus I of Lydia we have two very convincing candidates. In the first of these we have an Arkas/Arktouros who adds an Arthur the hunter, culture-hero and transfigured constellation, ruler of an aboriginal race, with suppositious birth and connexion with Lycaon before the flood. The other is Arduus ἱππότης ὁ πλεῖστος, with a historically attested kingdom, a capital Xuaris (cf. medieval Sarras), a forerunner Kamblet-, and an interesting reworking of the 'culture-hero' of cart-maker and wine-provider. If Kamblet- is Heracles, then this Heraclid ruler is Arduus 'of Kamblet', and there is little left to prove. Both candidates can moreover be related to convincing Gawain-figures, at least by conflated genealogies of a kind, Arkas/Arktouros by conflating two Temenoi of whom Gauanes can be the descendant; the other by conflating Arduus and an unrelated Arduus who brings up his great-nephew Gyges of Lydia. And we have a very passable Lancelot-figure, even if the name itself continues to trouble us. We can at least show that both versions of the name Arthur/Artus are ancient; indeed, one is alleged to be quite literally antediluvian. We have also bits and pieces of Graal legends even more obscurely and incompletely represented in our classical than in our medieval sources, round Icarus/Icarius, Perdiccas, Perdix, Talus (Calus) and Tantalus, and located variously in mainland Greece, Macedonia and Lydia. Our ancient Tristan texts come from 'Babylonian'⁴ –

allegedly, and at least have a plausibly early Persian background. Given the reputation of Perdix, first king of Macedonia, as a describer of a circle, we might guess that the Round Table and the Graal may themselves have a common origin, and that tales of Arthur and the wheel of fortune and Ardu as a cartmaker (and hence wheelwright) sit well together, even if precise connexions still elude us. The stellar relations of Arktouros⁵ might also encourage us to think in terms of stellar orbits: Arktouros was seen (and still *is* seen) to traverse the northern sky in pursuit of a Callisto bearing the name Helice ('Circle'). The occasional hint that the Round Table itself had cosmic connexions should not surprise us:⁶ any culture-hero concerned with basic agriculture would have needed some elementary knowledge of the stars, and it would have been no surprise to find him construct a hemispherical star-map, before being honorifically incorporated into it in his own person. This is not just rationalising speculation: both Béroul and the *Queste*-author hint at a world or stellar symbolism for the Round Table. Nor is there any getting away from the fact that the mythological Arcadian Arthur is presented as the founder of a community Trapezus, which automatically means that his followers were some kind of Table-persons.

By any standards this is a very good haul indeed, and Arthurian scholarship needs to be substantially extended to take account of it. Best of all, it shows us history and legend in operation on 'Arthurian figures' at an early stage: Ardu looking at severed heads by the fifth century, Gyges obtaining a ring of invisibility from a giant's corpse a century later, and the earliest Arktouros contemporary with the Flood. We must of course guard against false dawns, and bear in mind some of the more optimistic identifications of Mycenaean rulers in Hittite texts in the mid-twentieth century.⁷ It should none the less be possible to say not that 'the gap in fifth-century AD history is Arthur-shaped' but that 'the figures of Arkas/Arktouros and Ardu turn out to have been too big to be confined to a tiny Arthur-shaped gap in sub-Romano-British history'. Not of course that any of this rules out an Arthur passed over in silence by Gildas. The enigmatic phrase *auriga currus receptaculi ursi* ('charioteer of the Bear's Stronghold') in c.32 of Gildas' work might indeed refer in some way to the bear-warden idea.⁸ But more than one convergent template was there to fill the gap, and we must also of course find room for the Lucius Artorius Castus so arbitrarily dismissed from consideration for so long.

The best we can make of all this is to say that the diffusive effect of Arthurian tales and motifs is already clearly in evidence by the time of Eumelus, Herodotus and Xanthus – as much in the East at a period when Celts, however ethnically defined, might still only have been *arriving* in Britain, as at a time when they would have represented a cultural body that could influence other British sources.⁹

But are these stories of Ardu, Arktouros and their associates really Arthurian texts at all, and if not, what are they? If we regard them as isolated figures who just happen accidentally to anticipate 'the' Arthur of medieval legend and

romance, we are putting far too heavy a strain on multiple coincidence. Can it really be due to coincidence that an Arkas renamed Arktouros will found a place called 'Table'? Or that a queen called Gunavara in medieval Sanskrit literature should be the slandered mother of yet another 'Bear's Son' hero? Are we to take it that an Arduus with a name closely resembling the continental form of Arthur, Artus, will have a brother whose name closely resembles that of Arthur's step-brother Kay, and that he will also be 'greatest of knights'? Is it pure coincidence that a youth with attributes of Perceval has a Graal-type adventure with a brother Gauanes in a place actually *called* 'cauldron-ville'? Readers must determine for themselves how to judge the parameters required by fluid spelling variations and fluid motifs. But they are faced with the inexorable evidence that John of Howden and a fourteenth-century Lexicon, among a number of others, quite clearly identify Arcturus the star with the spelling Arthurus itself.¹⁰

What I think we have here is a group of names and narrative fragments that one might label 'average' for Arthurian material – some fairly primitive, some obviously legendary, some *ben trovato*, some historically quite plausible, and in among it all no doubt some cases where our guesswork is probably just too good to be true. What seems to this author clear enough is that these are much the kind of Arthurs we could have expected – had anyone seen fit to expect him at so early a date at all: an Arthur as close to 'burning the cakes' type stories as to courts and chivalry, where palaces have smoke-holes and Gawain or Perceval tends sheep and goats, and the king himself can turn his hand to cart-making and innkeeping – *some of the time*, to say nothing of rescuing damsels in distress from swollen rivers, or carrying out operations appropriate to the foundation of agriculture. And we must bear in mind that the kingdom of Gyges at least was phenomenally and proverbially prosperous, and the early kingdom of Bronze Age Arcadia enticingly remote; and we already have an entry here into the wonderland of the courtly romances. Yet there is certainly a kernel of historical connexion round both Arduus and Gyges, as well no doubt as much more dimly in the case of Arktouros: Gyges certainly existed, issued coinage and made offerings to Delphi – of what could readily have been seen in medieval times as Holy Graals. We also have an Arthur whose suitcase is packed for foreign travel: by the same route and circumstances as Geoffrey's Brutus can be the ancestor of the British, so can an Arduus of a nation whose ancient kings include Lydus and Belus be presented as a part of the world of a 'Llydd son of Beli' in Britain.¹¹ And after all, there were Celtic claims of connexion with Troy or assimilation of Scotti to Scythai; and a tragic Tristan story in early Greek tradition belongs only just up the coast from Lydia once more, at Troy. But we do not have to rely on these connexions, any more than on the Sarmatian cohorts: we have a substantial migratory folktale complex with a respectable number of medieval and modern analogues to act as a wider context for heroic Arthurian legends. The fact that Arkas/Arktouros was quite literally a bear's son opens the floodgates to a folktale which finds room for a

substantial proportion of the situations of medieval Arthurian Romance varied again and again.

We can now look at Arthur-figures well outside the chronological constrictions of later Roman Britain, and who need not be British at all, to fulfil the requirements of Arthurian nomenclature and standard situations. It goes without saying that the material presented here need not be the earliest Arthur-material by a long way: a possible Hittite Ivain-text is a warning that this is only the beginning of what might be an infinite regress.¹² Some scholars lose patience with *Quellenforschung* that simply pushes relentlessly back and back. The obvious rejoinder to them is that this is simply how it is: if scholars had accepted Rohde's views on the ancient Greek novel, we should still have them in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, while now we know that most were written at least as early as the early Roman Empire.¹³ If we find an Arthur-figure many centuries BC in a reasonably coherent complex of congruent material, then the patriotic notion of an *originally* British Arthur must simply be abandoned. We must assume that the sub-Romano-British world adopted and integrated a ready-made national hero as readily as the medieval Anglo-Normans adopted a ready-made patron saint George; and that crusaders found Arthur as well known in the East as in the West because he had been known there much longer. Loomis¹⁴ reminded us that the world of the Crusaders was a world where French would have been heard and spoken over considerable stretches of Western Asia: it is well to remind ourselves that it is the French form Artus that would therefore have been to hand there to compare with any oral memories of Arthus. As for Arktouros, his existence at a culture-hero level makes it easy for him to exist in an early mythological stratum across a wide area transcending the national boundaries of the first millennium BC or AD.

We are now in a position to say something not only about the historicity of Arthur, but on the subject of the so-called 'Sarmatian connexion' as well. We can now look once more at the 'Arthur of history', and note just how insignificant he was in relation to the weight of tradition he was carrying. We cannot determine strictly speaking that there *was* any Dark Age British military figure actually called or 'entitled' Arthur, any more than Jackson or Alcock could when they posed the same question,¹⁵ and we can now edge a great deal closer to Dumville's assertion that 'the fact of the matter is that there is no historical evidence about Arthur'.¹⁶ But we might be tempted to put the matter another way: any struggling Dark Age warlord who did *not* think seriously of taking the name and identity of Arthur was missing out on an opportunity to annex a wealth of heroic tradition already established round the name, both through its Arcadian and Lydian bearers, as well as through the obvious similarity to the conspicuously successful Artorius Castus. Here was a storm-figure who could be an agent of his father Jupiter in enforcing justice and restoring order, just as he did in Plautus' *Rudens*.

As to the 'Sarmatian connexion', the hypothesis does indeed work, up to a point; and the new texts support it, again up to a point – more particularly

the existence of a Nart Round Table in addition to the 'sword-losing' episode. Moreover, it could be said that the reconstruction of Castus' career by Malcor means in effect that stories of Arthur in Italy or Jerusalem are not absurd and *ben trovato*, if Artorius had a posting in the East at some stage in his career, and that as a successful Roman officer he could well have enjoyed celebrity in Rome itself.¹⁷ But if the name Artorius came to Hadrian's Wall thanks to a Sarmatian cohort with its Roman-citizen commander, we cannot argue the same route for say, the Peronnik who pursues his Graal Quest in Brittany in a manner comparable to Perdiccas in Macedonia. The routes of diffusion would have been a good deal more complex, and we should be extremely unwise to hazard a guess at the epicentre of such materials. But we should note that there is a sense in which Alexander has acquired supporting adventures like those of a 'Bear's Son' hero and a Graal quester, even before the end of Antiquity. We should note in passing at least the occurrence of a force of Alani in our *Urtristan* text, and in an exactly contemporary non-Arthurian heroic Romance set in Scythia by Lucian: the barbarian connexion in ancient fiction is a real one,¹⁸ and it is established early.

There is one overriding advantage of the new testimonia from Nicolaus and the other Gyges-texts: these are texts which, relative to each other, and in relation to their authors, are much more secure than 'Nennius' or the early Welsh material can hope to be. Herodotus is a single if idiosyncratic author, not a clerical maker of scrapbooks; he belongs to the fifth century BC, and while his notion of history differs very sharply from our own likely preconceptions, his methods are much more firmly studied and understood than those of 'Nennius'.¹⁹ The stories of Gyges can be fixed chronologically in relation to solid Assyriological material, and we have a very good idea of the economic basis for such an individual's rapid rise to be the stuff of legend.²⁰ And the Tristan material is securely dated to no later than the second century AD, and probably existed much earlier in some oriental form. In Gyges we have someone who was already legendary by Plato's time;²¹ and in almost all cases we have the stuff of legendary ancestor material: the Pelasgian culture-hero Arkas/Arktouros, the first king of Macedonia, the inventor of the compasses, the inventor of coinage, the greatest Heraclid ruler, the eponymous ancestor of Lydia Lydus,²² and so on. What we seem clearly to be dealing with is not necessarily the utterly unhistorical, but certainly the stuff of migratory legend: legendary figures spectacular enough to engender a number of variations around their achievements, just as Theseus, Alexander, Achilles and Batraz in turn were to do in the succeeding few centuries.²³ Indeed, if we were to push the legendary side of Theseus we should come up with yet another figure that would pass for an Arthur by another name, while the journey to the island in the custody of a water-goddess fits Achilles, like a good deal of the Ossetian material so useful in stimulating the idea of a traditional Eastern Arthur. The extension of the figure of Batraz to parallel Arthur and the wheel of fortune is also important.

Our problem is to determine whether on the basis of such resemblances we have an earlier Arthur, bits and pieces of several such, or some amazing chain of coincidences allowed by parameters just a little too flexible. My own reaction is in the first instance to be as surprised as I expect my putative reader's to be, deafened as we all are with claims of 'true' or 'real' Arthurs and the sensation-mongering that surrounds them: but with time for reflexion, I am inclined to guess that the present material *ought* to be the end at least for 'real Arthurs' of the sixth century AD: if the historical gap is 'Arthur-shaped',²⁴ the accumulation of vaguely or less vaguely Arthurian material waiting in oral tradition of international migratory legend is already large enough and old enough to fill any such gap, and widen it considerably in the industry of medieval Romance production. Already in ancient history the 'Sarmatian connexion' should have been taken more seriously than it has been. And evidence of the existence in Antiquity of a Romance tradition set in Scythia cannot be contradicted.²⁵

One particular motif is appropriate to refer to at this point: this is the idea that Arthur will come,²⁶ and that he and his warriors lie buried underground and are waiting to be activated. The motif occurs a number of times in local British folklore, with someone stumbling in on the sleeping king and his warriors in their banquet hall inside a hill; when they begin to stir, the reluctant and accidental discoverer leaves and the rising of Arthur is accordingly postponed.²⁷ Variants on the story are still assigned specifically to Arthur at least as far east as Sicily: one expects such tales particularly in the context of volcanic activity underground.²⁸ One notes scenarios where such legends would readily arise: the Chinese terracotta army offers one such instance, not specifically related, but readily capable of giving rise to comparable legendary material. Plato's story of the ground giving way and Gyges' access to the underground chamber with the horse burial is itself an obvious example.²⁹ One thinks also of Scythian horse burial (and human sacrifice) laid out within an underground barrow tomb, as at the Kostromskaya Barrow (fifth century BC).³⁰ The Armenian legend of the imprisonment of King Artavazd, as recorded by Moses of Chorene, offers more: yet another king is held in the mountain, in this instance Prometheus-like in chains.³¹ As for the wider concept of a national saviour, again we might note that Theseus is able to appear at Marathon in Athens' hour of need.³²

Back then to the inevitable pressure for a judgement on 'the real Arthur'. It should be clear to any reader that this author regards the whole problem when put in those terms as a distraction and an oversimplification, an invitation to scholarly quests and adventures, or to melodramatic sleuthing, rather than to scholarly investigation. But our new candidates afford not only chronological priority but a good spread of evidence, which can be phrased as follows:

There are certainly two early Greek or pre-Greek traditions of an Arktouros proper, an Arcadian and Athenian culture-hero, connected

with basic civilisation, hunting, theriomorphic encounters, and wine production, death and resurrection. This figure gives us very useful early material for the romantic and mystical kinds of adventure that surface in Medieval romance surrounding King Arthur's Court, in material still endorsed by the survival of oral folktale over a wide area of Europe and the Near East.

There was no less certainly a real Artus-figure, (Ardus presents us with only a voiced-dental form of the name), and he does precede the Arturus supposedly contemporary of Gildas by something in the order of twelve hundred years, the Artorius Castus candidate by close on nine hundred, and the Artus of Chrétien de Troyes by close on two thousand. He was indeed a king of a region from which insular sources saw fit to claim ancestry, and more broadly to the same part of the world that supplied the English with Saint George. He was indeed greatest of knights, and he was capable of fielding the equivalent of some six Roman legions; he belonged to a culture where severed heads of enemies were presented to the king, and he engaged in a ruse that involved donating his own scalp;³³ he had a brother Kadus, and the latter's doctor died through incarceration underground at the intrigue of a woman and enemy of the king. He had a Heraclid ancestry and so a centuries-old connexion with a maimed fisher, Heracles' assistant Philoctetes or Gainlove, and himself initiated a quest for the murderer of an eminent grandee called Dascyl (Fish), whose son refused to show interest or respond correctly to the quest, but whose grandson Gugu/Walwe? accomplished the task. The aforesaid, great-nephew and adopted son of another Ardus, enjoyed immense prestige and was able to gain possession of at least one golden bowl, dedicated in honour of a solar deity; he had an adventure at an underground tomb, a dynastic name associating him like that of the Welsh Gawain Gwalchmai with the hawk, killed a Green king and took control of his royal axe and wife, spared an unyielding enemy through a trick, and found a new way of 'keeping a woman young'. And the Lydian royal house had an agent responsible for the death by water of a lady of Askelon.

In the Ardus material we have both a historical and a legendary kernel for Arthur, Kay or Cadoc or both, Merlin, Gawain, a supply of round tables and Graals, a Waste Land and its unwilling avenger, a Green Knight Adventure, a Dame Ragnall, and a dragon-head phenomenon – to say nothing of a greatest of knights, and most of it from a single by no means disreputable source, Nicholaus/Xanthus, inclined to anecdote but on the whole preferring history to fantasy. That is about as much as we get from all our British Dark Age sources put together. Little in the above account requires resort to legend at all; all of it is pre-Christian, and most probably quite close to events themselves.

The materials surrounding the Arktouros combined from Arkas and Icarus offer us more fantastic material appropriate to a mythological hero. And it should be obvious that Arduus I of Lydia, brother of Kadus, had credentials which would have enabled him to generate adventures as far removed from reality as those that adorn the *Alexander Romance*. And they have lasted, if this author is right, much longer even than the fantasies of that amazingly successful text.

Few investigations of the Arthurian problem pause to evaluate the other competing candidates for any length of time. But to accept Arkas/Arktouros and the Lydian Arduus as keystones in East Mediterranean forms of the legend is not to reject contributions from subsequent candidates to any expanding corpus of legend – or indeed from other elements further back in time. The idea that either candidate is situated in the ‘wrong’ time and place is not a very sound argument when legendary material is in question. It is migratory by nature,³⁴ and these candidates are by comparison with other British Arthur-figures very well documented indeed, and very early on. If Heracles can appear one moment in Scythia and the next in Gaul or Spain, then so can any Heraclid monarch do the same: the numerous channels of communication across the Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to the end of the Roman Empire are a guarantee of that. Arduus offers us a kingdom, a Graal quest, a Waste Land, and a singularly successful relative, set in a culture area where such materials were well able, and well placed, to proliferate. It is well established that the Celts shared a number of features of their heroic culture with those of the Thracians, Phrygians and Scythians in the first place, a matter somewhat obscured by the restricted perspective of Littleton and Malcor.³⁵ In the course of their migrations the Celts were established in Spain and Gaul, and also in the Hellenistic period in Galatia in Northern Anatolia; while a Greek city of Western Asia Minor such as Phocaea had a cultural toehold in Gaul (at Massilia) before the Celts themselves are likely to have arrived there themselves. We should reflect that at the date of the founding of this outpost of Hellenism in the West the successes and failures of the Lydians of the previous century would have been both hot news and home news. Add to this the normal processes entailed in the diffusion of stories. Lucian in *Toxaris* has his Scythian evidently reciting Scythian tales in Athens; he himself travelled as far as Gaul (whether before or after the *Toxaris*), and claims to have heard an *interpretatio Celtica* of Heracles as Ogmios.³⁶ Not long before Lucian we encounter Dio Chrysostom, who claims to hear in the wilds of the Peloponnese his Allegory of Sovereignty revealed to Heracles, and who himself purports to tell a Persian tale in a Greek outpost in Scythia.³⁷ Such figures might be suspiciously plausible at times, but they are real, travelled as sophists, and could transplant a story from one end of the Roman Empire to the other as the fancy took them. By contrast the nature of the Arktouros material suggests a time of diffusion much earlier than we can hope to trace in historical record. In particular the congruence of several elements in the story with very widely diffused flood

mythology suggests that it will be difficult to push much further back than we now can.

If neither Arktoouros nor Arduus were to be seen as 'our' Arthur, then 'our' Arthur has to be viewed as a rather late addition and, if not an imitation, a simple replication of someone who already approximates to the full-blown medieval legend purveyed by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien, *but all of two millennia earlier*. In other words, the new Arthurs come ready-made. We can now point to Arthurs who interestingly bridge the gap between the world of the late medieval romances and the much more homely Dark Age materials in the Welsh sources or the Latin Saints' Lives. One moment Arduus will be making a cart or running an inn, and looking at his enemies' heads brought by a loyal and enthusiastic innkeeper; the next he will be reclaiming the capital of an ancient sovereign state, presumably at Sardis, and his successors are capable of sending embassies to Ashurbanipal, and sumptuous offerings to a Greek oracle. And it is to *this* Arduus that the continental form Artus might reasonably be said to look back.

It is useful to take stock of the kind of material that seems to be travelling: unusual tests of kingship, a sub-royal chase in the Tristan legends, quests to do with land clearance, stories of taboo-breaking, human sacrifice and star status. And the materials can be noticed surfacing in ancient comedy Old as well as New: a more fully delineated ancient Arthur might not look too different from the Trygaeus of Aristophanes' *Peace*.

Nor is such migratory material at all unusual. We are used to the notion that our other supposedly medieval national icon St George³⁸ is an import from the ancient world, thanks in large measure to his context in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. The reason that we have always been able to accept him as an import is that his historical existence in the Near East under the Roman Empire was long known, so that his re-setting in England could be seen as a patent transplant at the very outset. In fact there is something to suggest that he has more in common with the ancient Near Eastern template of an Arthurian figure than is generally acknowledged: not only do both fight a monster and rescue a maiden, but the agricultural dimension of Arthur's activities is embodied in the very name Georgos itself, simply the Greek for farmer. As for St George, we can now acknowledge the early Eastern priority of Arthur.

What is left for future investigation? I have not been able to find a precise parallel for the main anecdote in Nicolaus, the tale of Arduus, Kerses and the death of Spermus;³⁹ nor am I sure of the identity of Spermus himself. It may be that a more thoroughly practised Arthurian scholar – of some unpublished Magyar or Bogomil Tristan, for example – can provide the answer immediately; but until that time Lucian's Scythian tale of Macentes and Leucanor offers perhaps the most helpfully similar ethos.⁴⁰ There is further the task of looking closely at the names under which other Near Eastern peoples might have described the star Arcturus. Sumero-Babylonian figures such as Papsukkal and

Ninurta offer invaluable analogues, more particularly the latter, with his combination of martial prowess, demon-slaying and attribution of agricultural instructions. But this must be a task for the future.

The consequences for Ancient fiction

One unexpected result emerging from all this affects what has long seemed a completely unrelated field. If Arthurian materials can be traced to characters of the seventh century BC or earlier, what are the likely consequences for the history of romance itself? The orthodox answer has long been that prose fiction, or at any rate love romance, emerges in Greek in the Hellenistic world, and that its focus is basically the middle-class milieu of the Eastern Mediterranean cities after the age of Alexander the Great.⁴¹ One thinks in particular of Longus, Achilles Tatius and Xenophon of Ephesus, where local aristocrats (but with basically bourgeois values) belong to the cities of Mytilene, Sidon and Ephesus respectively. The later example of Heliodorus might serve as a warning here: the heroine is a genuine barbarian princess, and the hero and heroine of the fragmentary Ninus Romance, usually regarded as the earliest among the romances, actually features an Assyrian (Babylonian) king and queen, Ninus and Semiramis.⁴² But what consequences ought we to draw for the origins of romance if Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca* claims to be a translation of an Eastern story that was actually about Tristan and Isolde? Or that material usually overlapping with the Tristan saga can be at least glimpsed as early as Herodotus? Are we able at least to ask whether the earliest romance we know of in Greek is not only oriental (not a new idea⁴³) but Arthurian (a completely new one)?

One important detail about Iamblichus' work is its colossal length. If we take the lower estimate of book numbers (sixteen as opposed to thirty-nine),⁴⁴ we still have substantially the longest ancient romance known, and the reasonable assumption that it already existed in an oriental language by the second century AD, when the writer claims to have translated it into Greek. And we have here a romance on a sub-Arthurian subject, or a traditionally Arthur-related one. If something as long and complex existed so early, it suggests that the rest of the Arthurian material might also have existed as early at such length. (That it existed at all is clear enough from Nicolaus, Herodotus and Eumelus, if not from the Hesiodic fragments of the Arkas story.) We are also entitled to suspect any claim that this is Greek romance merely transplanted to an oriental setting and decorated with spurious author's credentials: with the analogue of the differently handled story of Zahak and Feridun in the *Shah-Nama*, this has to be genuinely Persian material and not just any random cross-cultural import (and it is clear enough that Firdausi was not drawing directly on a translation of Iamblichus or any Western Tristan-material for his account of the story⁴⁵). The scale of the work, and the length and ambition of the long fragments, make it clear that we are dealing with a Tristan

similar in character and ambition to the account of Gottfried or of the Prose Tristan (as opposed to the folk telling of Béroul, for example). There really was an ancient 'Rhodan and *Sinonda', with an elaborate literary treatment.

We must now go on to ask: was there Arthurian romance, or Arthurian chronicle, on any scale, *before* Iamblichus' work? It might be possible to argue that the short episodic accounts known to Herodotus or Nicolaus establish that the material was reported in Greek as far as we know only at the most minimal level: Herodotus' mention of Gauanes at Lebaea only occupies the length of a couple of paragraphs, and Nicolaus/Xanthus seems not much more detailed.⁴⁶ But both accounts quite clearly come across as summaries alluding briefly to further episodes; episodes intervene between Perdiccas' acknowledgement at Lebaea and his gaining the throne of Macedonia;⁴⁷ and the tasks allotted to Gyges by Sadyattes/Candaules would have been capable of considerable expansion,⁴⁸ to say nothing about our information on the snake's headstone of Gyges, or the episode of the royal axe of Candaules in Plutarch.⁴⁹ But more to the point, we know that the story of Gyges had already reached the dramatic stage, presumably at the full length of a tragedy, by at least the fourth/third century BC, in Greek at least.⁵⁰ That does not guarantee that it already existed as a romance, but it underlines how well known it must have been: this was not material confined to the study of an Alexandrian grammarian or a local antiquarian in Lydia. The more obviously erotic versions in Herodotus or Plato might well have enjoyed a circulation in the more dubious milieu of 'Milesian Tales'. Moreover, Plato's version of Gyges also indicates abridgement: Gyges found much in the underground chamber besides the possessor of the magic ring, as Plato's phrasing makes clear.⁵¹

As we have seen, we know of several analogous demonstrations of the workings of 'heroic royal fiction' in antiquity, one at least of phenomenal popularity. The *Alexander Romance* is one indication of the trappings a spectacularly successful figure could acquire: traditional layers of prophecy, bedroom intrigue, wonder narrative, mendacious extensions of real conquests and, perhaps most importantly, a clear attempt for another people altogether to lay claim to him. If the Egyptians claimed him for the line of Nectanebus, and the Persians (more rightly) wrote him as Sekandar into the records of the kings of Persia,⁵² might we expect the greatest of knights Arduus to have enjoyed some similar *éclat*? Accidents of survival seem against him, and he may have been lying low in his secret caverns for long enough, but when he makes his comeback East and West it seems to be with a vengeance, reinforced as he is by the arch-civiliser *Ur-Arktouros*, already set in a constellation.

We might also of course be tempted to argue that much of the Arthurian material is already absorbed and submerged into early classical tradition in other guises and under other names. Traditions about Theseus may well be early and were certainly firmly set in legend by Plutarch's time, allowing us to assemble a 'classical' Greek Arthur by another name, or rather a Bronze Age heroic Arthur who just happens to live in Athens.⁵³ And this at least raises the

question whether we are dealing with no more or less than an Indo-European royal heroic kingship cycle, which merely re-invents itself or enjoys a literary efflorescence wherever there is an appropriate written or oral channel of transmission. To my mind Theseus is suppositiously fathered by a dynast with dragon connexions (Aegeus from the line of Erechtheus), takes a sword of kingship from under a stone, kills monstrous men in single combat, has an overseas Argonautic adventure, hunts a huge boar, has an unfaithful wife, is in touch with a maimed king in a mysterious place (in the Oedipus legend), and goes to an island to die, threatened there with a perilous cliff. King Arthur has been attributed in the Romance tradition with every single one of these; and we have noted the similarities of Tristan to Paris in turn.

* * *

Why have these lines of enquiry not been pursued in the past? One reason, I think, is that the range of philological, historical and folkloric training is not only now impossible to attain in a lifetime, but that in an age when *Wissenschaft* was much more confined interests diverged very sharply between those whose goal lay in the editing of Old French Romances and those concerned with testing the genealogies of Dark Age British history. Comparative mythology as such got off to a bad start with its solar aberrations in the late nineteenth century, and has seldom been able to bridge the gap. Scholars with the range of Gaster or Alexander Heggarty Krappe have been few and far between. But the configuration of the evidence is itself very difficult. The sub-Roman period is still a perilous black hole, and Lydian history before Gyges is even more so; displacing Arthur from one to the other is part of the infinite regress of source-hunting. The Pelasgian period and the claims of culture-heroes belong almost entirely to mythology, and to stereotyped patterns of mythological thinking. But the names are there, and they should be taken seriously; where I have conjectured genealogical confusion, it is not reliant on variant spelling but on precise homonyms (Ardus/Ardus; Temenos/Temenos).

Arthurian identities

Among the numerous semi-popular investigations of Arthur in recent decades there is one memorably called 'Will the real King Arthur please stand up?' If the same question were asked of the candidates advanced here, lying together in just one of the sites where King Arthur is felt to repose, we might have a good half-dozen claimants elbowing for recognition, or clamouring for their place on the wheel of fortune: Arktouros of Arcadia, Arktouros of Athens, Ardus of Lydia greatest of Knights, Ardys of Lydia great-uncle of Gyges, Lucius Artorius Castus, and Arthur son of Uther. We might begin to eliminate those without dragon-head credentials of any sort, and still we might find no one willing to lie down again; their individual claims might include

‘Nicolaus of Damascus called me Greatest of Knights’, or ‘I was older’; while only Arthur son of Uther could say ‘I am the only one most people have even heard of’ – ‘until now’ might be a reasonable reply from his rivals, as he is politely requested to lie down again.

APPENDIX 1

FROM KAMBLES TO CAMALIS

The evidence below will set out to show that the French testimony for the origin and background of Camelot reflects the foundation of the Lydian Heraclid dynasty¹ to which Ardu belonged by Heracles himself, under a Lydian title Kandaules > Kambles. Our two Lydian historians speak of a mad glutton-king Kambles or Kamblites, who murders his wife and commits suicide after being driven mad by poison; this corresponds to the madness and suicide of Heracles, though context and details differ considerably.

While some sources credit Arthur himself with the foundation of his characteristic seat of Camelot,² the Post-Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal* has the city ruled by an ancient king Cama(a)lis.³ In isolation that might be dismissed as merely plausible conjecture to produce an eponymous founder. But some further information is offered about this Camalis: that he persecuted Christians in the time of Joseph of Arimathea, and was defeated and converted, after which Camelot will have been Christian. However, the Vulgate Lancelot deals with the Christianising of Camelot in a different way. The King's name this time is given as Agrestes:⁴ he pretends to convert in the time of Joseph of Arimathea, then reverts to paganism and persecutes Christians on the latter's departure. As a punishment he goes mad, kills his wife and children, begins to eat his hands, and throws himself into a fire. It is not unreasonable to see these two figures Camalis and Agrestes, alive at the same time and responding to the same events in the same city, as different versions of a single persecutor who is both king of Camelot, a wife-killer, a person of potential cannibal behaviour, a wild man (hence the name Agrestes), and a figure who gives his name to the city in the first place.

If we can find such a predecessor among the Lydian predecessors of Ardu, we are well on the way to establishing a decisive congruence with the Medieval French material. There is only one such candidate: either a Heraclid king called Kamblitas or Kambles (genitive stem Kamblet-), or Heracles himself with the name Kambles or Kamblitas as a Lydian title. Whichever might be the case, this name immediately and strikingly gives us an Ardu who rules over the city 'of Kamblet-' either person or place – whatever that city might have been called in its own right. And in fact the possibility that

Kambles/Kamblitas/Agrestes represents Heracles himself can be readily preferred: we know the former to have been a mad glutton, a suspected wife-killer and cannibal, and the profile is obviously a very distinctive one. Here are the testimonia from Xanthus and Nicolaus respectively:

Xanthus *FGrH* 765F18: Kambles the king of Lydia ate great quantities of food and drank great quantities of wine, in fact he was a glutton. So one night he chopped up his own wife and ate her, and when the next morning he found her hand in his mouth and the matter had come to light, he killed himself.⁵

Nicolaus *FGrH* 90F22: Kamblitas was king of Lydia. It is said that he was so gluttonous that he wanted to eat his own wife. He for his part supposed when the matter became public [that he had actually done so], that he had been damaged by drugs, and stood in the middle of the agora full of people with sword in hand and said 'O Zeus, if I did what I have done of my own accord, may I pay the penalty on my own account. But if I have been corrupted by poison, may those who poisoned me suffer.' With these words he killed himself in the sight of all. And some ridiculed him as a glutton, while others pitied him as driven out of his mind by the poisons. And they suspected that Iardanus had done this through hatred of him.⁶

These testimonia complement each other and correspond up to a point with the Camalis-Agrestes story noted above. It is not his wife's hand that Agrestes eats, but he tries to eat his own, and merely kills his wife. The Iardanus referred to as the perpetrator of Kambles/Kamblitas' misfortune takes us straight to where we should expect: he is an acquaintance of that other mad wife-murdering glutton Heracles, who it will be remembered spends a period of servitude and amorous attachment in Lydia to Omphale,⁷ the very daughter of Iardanus, and who evidently initiates the dynasty named after him, the Heraclids, of which Arduus I was one of the later members. Hesychius knew that Heracles was a Kandaules ('Dog-throttler') in Lydian,⁸ a term specially appropriate for a combatant of the Underworld hound Cerberus. The term is not difficult to reduce in Greek, as follows: Kandaules > Kandables > Kambles > Kambles. If Arduus was a Heraclid and Heracles was Kambles, then he should be entitled to be called 'Arduus of the line of Heracles', Arduus of Kamblet. Add 'greatest of knights' to such a title, and we have the Camalat/Camelot we are looking for, corresponding to the city of Camalis: for we shall have an 'Arduus of Kamblet, greatest of knights'. If this seems facile, let us note that the Vulgate Cycle makes Camalat a city with the greatest Saracen population of Britain.⁹ Now the capital of the Lydian kings, the Sardis of Herodotus, was called Xuaris by Xanthus.¹⁰ So if the capital of Lydia did not change, the city of Xuarisenoi (or some such) would have been the city of Kamblet-, just as the Vulgate Cycle

wants to make its British counterpart. It would help considerably if we were to find corresponding stories of Heracles too in Britain, actually separate from the material tied to the Arthur complex we are constructing. And we do. Heracles is a slave in the land of the eponymous king Lydus, who had once to face a famine.¹¹ In the *Mabinogion* we find the British king Llydd enslaving a gluttonous giant caught eating his country out of house and home, but promising to serve him in return for his life.¹²

We can set forth the material as follows:

Camalis founds city Camalat	Agrestes is King of Camalat	King Kambles, King of Lydia	Heracles, consort of Queen of Lydia
it contains the largest number of Saracens		Lydian capital once known as Xuaris	Lydian capital once known as Xuaris
in time of Joseph of Arimathea	in time of Joseph of Arimathea	generations before Ardus	generations before Ardus
	he goes mad, eats his own hands, and kills his children	is glutton, goes mad, eats wife, leaving a hand	is glutton, goes mad, kills wife
	kills himself by burning	kills himself by stabbing	kills himself by burning
		blames enemy Iardanus	has possible enemy Iardanus
King Arthur becomes King of Camelot		Ardus becomes king of his country, including any city of Kambles	Ardus becomes king of his country

We should note the problems and assumptions that still attach to this view. We do not know that Kambles gave his name to a city, even though his French counterpart Camalis clearly does; we cannot be completely certain on the French evidence of the identification of Camalis and Agrestes, though the correspondences are obvious enough. Heracles clearly could not persecute the Christian followers of Joseph of Arimathea. But as will be clear from Chapter 7, the Graal legends are very securely pre-Christian, and so any anachronism springs simply from their Christianisation, and from the assumption that

Arthur himself belongs to the Christian era. Any revulsion against a cult based on human sacrifice could produce the requisite effect: Heracles was supposed to have fought and killed human sacrificers in Egypt, according to Herodotus 2.45; he could have done the same in Lydia. Moreover Heracles does not kill his wife in Lydia, let alone eat her, nor does he kill his Lydian royal consort Omphale. But we must make allowance for a limited Lydian view of Heracles' madness, and for consequent compression of his career. But regardless of any events in the reign of Kambles, it is still a matter of *historical* record in Nicolaus that Ardus, greatest of knights, numbered a King Kambles among his predecessors, and that in itself is enough to give us an Ardus, greatest of knights, who ruled over the same country as King Kamblet- had done. He was entitled to claim Kamblet- as a forerunner, and associate himself with any eponymous foundation of the latter's.

APPENDIX 2

MORE 'BEAR'S SON' HEROES: THESEUS, ACHILLES, BATRAZ, ALEXANDER

Now that we have looked at the evidence surrounding Arktouros and Arduš, we should ask whether there are any other 'Bear's Son' heroes still identifiable in Antiquity, and whether any of these have features that could be described as in any sense 'Arthurian'. Given the nature of the materials, it is quite feasible for a figure to emerge with a good number of the narrative motifs we have been looking at, yet under some entirely different name. The more such figures we can examine, the clearer any underlying patterns are likely to become, and the more clearly we can see how and why such a real historical figure as Alexander the Great has been adapted into romance in the way he has, and make appropriate comparisons with Arkas/Arktouros or Arduš.

Theseus

The most obvious starting-point is the mythological and legendary patchwork of traditions surrounding Theseus, the most prominent national hero of Athens, as Arkas is of Arkadia. That he is linked to what we should now call 'ancient' Arthurian tradition is clear from the 'sword-in-the-stone' paternity test arranged for him by his traditional father Aegeus.¹

When (Aegeus) learned that the girl he had slept with was Pittheus' daughter Aethra, and he suspected that she was pregnant, he hid a sword and sandals under a great rock, with a hollow large enough to contain them. He told Aethra alone about it and instructed her that if she bore a son, and if when he reached manhood he was strong enough to lift the stone and take out what he had hidden, she had to send the lad to himself with the tokens and without anyone else knowing

(6.2f.) And when (Theseus) had grown into a youth and in addition to his physical strength showed courage and good sense with maturity of understanding, Aethra brought him thus endowed to the stone, and explaining the truth about his birth, told him to take out his father's

tokens and sail to Athens. And he got underneath the rock and easily lifted it.

The fact that Theseus has to lift the stone itself to extricate the sword, rather than simply pull the sword out of the stone, is of course neither here nor there: the point in both cases is the test of strength (and hence paternity), as well as the provision of a weapon.

The motifs of the 'Bear's Son' story in general also loom large even in Plutarch's heavily rationalising material.² The obvious fingerprint should be supposititious birth with animal or supernatural connexions. The tradition here is that in response to an oracle Pittheus arranges that Aegeus sleep with his daughter without knowing the identity of his partner (or the real meaning of the oracle).³ This would qualify as another 'supposititious seduction', where one of the partners is unaware of the real identity of the other, as in the case of Uther and Igera in Malory and elsewhere;⁴ the animal element is provided in the name Aegeus, with its connexion with the root *aig-*, meaning a goat. (One notes the connexion of Arkas in turn with Pan as well as with a bear.)⁵ Dragon connections are also provided for Aegeus through his descent from Erichthonius and Erechtheus.⁶ For good measure Plutarch has Aethra held to be sleeping with Poseidon later the same night, thus adding a more traditional form of the 'supernatural seduction' motif.⁷

Plutarch also offers a variant on the 'rescued princesses' motif: he refers to a tradition that the labyrinth is actually a prison.⁸ We are so used to the association of 'Theseus and the Minotaur' as a mythological constant that we are not inclined to interpret it as a local or regional variation of anything else. But it should be strongly stressed that it is much easier to gain access to most of classical mythology than it is to probe the recesses of Arthurian literature. It is only in the one French Arthurian text written in the Provençal language Occitan, the Romance of *Jaufré*,⁹ that we find an extended episode in which Arthur himself has to fight a bull-like creature which only later turns into a man.

Other episodes in the Plutarch *Life* emphasise the implication of underground/underworld adventure, though in rationalised or euhemerised form:¹⁰

(Theseus) himself, returning Peirithous' service to himself, travelled with him to Epirus for the daughter of Aidoneus king of the Molossians: this latter had called his wife Persephone, his daughter Kore, and his dog Cerberus, and ordered his daughter's suitors to fight with the dog; its conqueror was to win her. But when he found out that the pair had arrived not as suitors, but as kidnappers, he seized them: he had Peirithous killed by the dog at once, and held Theseus in prison.

Here we simply have the traditional underground/otherworld wooing adventure reduced to the realms of the possible: myth is already turning into legend. But its importance for reconstructing the myths surrounding Arkas is substantial: it shows that 'Bear's Son' heroes in Antiquity do undergo episodes corresponding to the recovery of Persephone, just as we should suspect Arkas himself must have done in the context of newly instituted mysteries of Demeter.

While Theseus is trying to kidnap Persephone, his own intended bride Helen, kidnapped by Peirithous and Theseus and left behind by Theseus with companions, is lost and reclaimed by her brothers.¹¹ This would give us the element of 'bride-theft' from the hero so regular in 'Bear's Son' tales. We also find Theseus, like Arthur, in a love-triangle with a nephew: as Arthur is betrayed by Guinevere's dubious association with Mordred, so is Theseus betrayed by his unfaithful wife, though in this case the alleged seducer nephew is actually innocent. The name Phaedra ('Radiant') has the meaning assigned to Celtic etymologisings of Guinevere ('Shining White', or the like).¹²

The end of Theseus has also some links both with Arthur and with the 'Bear's Son' type in general. We are told that driven out by faction in Athens he crosses over to the island of Scyros, and that he later crosses water again as a corpse back to Athens. He is however killed by being pushed over a cliff by King Lycomedes of Scyros.¹³ Once again *Jaufré* provides the unusual parallel of Arthur pushed over a cliff, though in this case saved by his knights, who take steps to break his fall. It is the episode in Scyros too that offers us contact with the 'eagle' episode of the 'Bear's Son' tale. When the hero is trapped underground, it is often an eagle that brings him back to the upper world, sometimes having to eat some of his flesh to find the strength to finish the journey.¹⁴ Plutarch's *Life* offers the following, once more keeping strictly to the realms of the possible:¹⁵

It was a difficult task to find the tomb and take up the body [of Theseus], because the native Dolopes were hostile to strangers and barbarous. But Cimon took the island . . . and as he was anxious to find the tomb, saw an eagle at a site that looked like a mound, cutting with its beak and tearing with its talons. By some divine impulse he understood what this meant, and dug at the spot: he found the tomb with a great body, and a bronze spear beside it and a sword.

We can now see the overall comparison:

<i>Theseus</i>	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>Bear's Son</i>
suppositious birth (father a 'goat-man' or a Sea-god)	suppositious birth (father attributed with dragon's head)	suppositious birth

continued

<i>Theseus</i>	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>Bear's Son</i>
has strength to pull sword from <i>under</i> stone	has strength to pull sword from stone	
meets extraordinary enemies, including Pinebender (Pituo-kamptes)	has extraordinary, sometimes treacherous companions	has extraordinary, sometimes treacherous companions, including Pinebender
slays monster bullman with two companions	slays bullman (<i>Jaufré</i> only)	slays monster with two companions
tries to kidnap girl in Underworld or Underworldly named kingdom	has girl rescued in Otherworldly adventures	rescues girl in underground or Otherworldly adventure
body buried underground, eagle's pecking has it exhumed		hero trapped underground, rescued by eagle, who peck's hero's flesh
hero thrown over cliff	hero thrown over cliff (<i>Jaufré</i> only)	

It is not difficult to see that Theseus does indeed represent an in places not very different set of variations on the 'Bear's Son' complex to that represented by Arthur himself. In these circumstances it is no longer possible with Littleton-Malcor to argue the 'sword from the stone' motif as an isolated coincidence or heroic cliché.¹⁶

Achilles

But the most interesting exhibit in a classical context should probably be the greatest of all Greek heroes, Achilles: the work of Littleton-Malcor and Richard Wadge has underlined the resemblance between the Arthur/Lancelot figure and the Nart hero Batraz. In other respects Batraz is close to Achilles: not least in his being galvanised in fire and therefore having the distinctive Achilles heel.¹⁷ But are there any Arthurian characteristics about Achilles himself? The most noteworthy, and important for the whole case of an Eastern Arthur, is the distinctive motif of the return of Achilles' divine weapons. They are not of course thrown into any lake: but they *are* returned into the custody of their original provider Thetis, a sea-nymph protector of the hero, and in that sense

a counterpart to the ‘Lady of the Lake’. And Achilles in some versions does sail off after death, not to a Glass Island, but at least to a white island (though some versions of the earthly paradise do emphasise glass, for example, the parodic Lucian’s *True Histories*¹⁸). One notes too the wide provenance of local cults of Achilles from the Troad to the Northern Black Sea coasts.¹⁹ Littleton-Malcor draw an almost passing comparison, and no more, between the Lady of the Lake and the Thetis who presents her son Achilles with magic weapons. This will not do. It is especially unfortunate that Littleton-Malcor do not use the key testimonies, late as they are, in the classical period, that Thetis had Achilles sent off to the White Island in the Black Sea,²⁰ so close to the very Scythian area they emphasise. Littleton-Malcor have something to say of the rivalry of the Lady and Morgan le Fay for the control of Lancelot; it is worth drawing attention to the tradition about Achilles as finally married to Medea – just the kind of disreputable and ambiguous magician figure required to correspond to Morgan le Fay as a final companion in Avallon for Arthur.²¹

Batraz

We should also note the traditions surrounding Batraz himself, the Nart hero whose demise after the sword-flinging episode has provided the cornerstone of the ‘Scythian hypothesis’ in the first place. That parallel indeed is so striking, and so relatively difficult to reproduce, that it has led to the suggestion of Sarmatian oral tradition transferred to Britain. If we wish to provide an alternative explanation, then we should also find a way of explaining this resemblance in a broader context. That is in fact simply done. The Nart sagas collected by Dumézil and others make it clear enough that the career of Batraz is once more a part of the ‘Bear’s Son’ tradition, a configuration evidently missed by Dumézil himself. Batraz too has a supernatural (and still more unusual) birth, provided for specifically in the Arne-Thompson specification of the tale (conception takes place through his mother’s sitting on a stone, which again presumably reinforces the notion of the hero’s magical strength). This strength is further enhanced, like that of Achilles, by a galvanising process in fire which renders the parts so treated invulnerable. He combats a gigantic one-eyed monster, and he too rescues a princess underground, but has trouble with his companions and rivals Uryssmaeg and Soslan/Sosryquo. His downfall is sometimes attributed to the wheel of Barsag, an episode corresponding to the humiliation of Arthur on the wheel of fortune; and the disposal of the sword offers his still more Arthurian ending. It is worthwhile to examine these four ‘Bear’s Son’-related heroes synoptically:

<i>Theseus</i>	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>Achilles</i>	<i>Batraz</i>
trick conception	trick conception		strange conception
			continued

APPENDIX 2

<i>Theseus</i>	<i>Arthur</i>	<i>Achilles</i>	<i>Batrax</i>
		galvanised at birth	galvanised at birth
sword from stone test	sword from stone test	weapons test among the women	
	sword from lake	sword from water-mother	
	attains cauldron quest		attains cauldron quest
heroic boar-hunt	heroic boar-hunt		
	downfall by wheel of fortune		downfall by wheel of Barsag
	sword returned to lake	weapons returned to water-mother	sword returned to lake
island burial	journey to island paradise	journey to island paradise	
return in country's hour of need	return in country's hour of need		

The above table shows just how many points of resemblance there are in the broad context of 'Bear's Son' tales. They should also emphasise that the heroic features of Batraz are not so unique as to make him the only candidate who could have brought Arthurian tradition to the West. There can be little doubt that such tradition existed in Antiquity in sufficient profusion under the names *Arktouros*/*Arktos*/*Ardus* or their many variants to ensure that the tradition travelled under the hero's own identity, as it apparently has done in the case of at least Tristan and Gawain as well.

The Alexander Romance

The *Alexander Romance* is a part-legendary, part-mythical distortion of the career of Alexander the Great, and there is a tendency for scholars to see the work as pseudo-history, or as rather oddly unclassifiable romance.²² The importance of

the *Alexander Romance* for the history of popular literature has been well established.²³ Its sources have been thoroughly explored, and much of its development chronicled through a sequence of editions pioneered by Merkelbach.²⁴ But if Theseus, Achilles and Batras contain recognisable Arthurian motifs, and a framework of some of the 'Bear's Son' material, it is worth asking whether elements of the same basic legend at least contribute to the peculiar fantasies of the *Alexander Romance* as well.

Once more we have the elaborate beginning of a suppositious and once more animal-related birth. Nectanebus, the doomed king of Egypt, acts the part of both Uther Pendragon and Merlin when he impersonates the god Ammon and comes to the bed of Olympias to father Alexander, disguised in the first instance as a serpent.²⁵ And just as Arkas is preparing to kill his bear-mother without recognising her, so does Alexander actually kill Nectanebus, before realising that this is his father (again the motif of pushing over a cliff is used, as in the case of Theseus).²⁶ Alexander has an adventure in a variety of Otherworldly realms, including one where he is recognised (but not betrayed) by its resourceful queen;²⁷ one thinks of the resourceful stratagems of Morgan to capture Arthur or his deputies. Again, Alexander is sunk by a bathyscope to the depth of the ocean, and one can compare the letting down of the bear's son by a well rope till he reaches the other world.²⁸ Similarly, Alexander is borne aloft to the heavens, not by one eagle eating his own flesh, but usually by a number of large birds trying to eat flesh provided by the king.²⁹

Alexander at the Graal Castle?

One key episode in the Arthurian materials has a still more striking analogue in the *Alexander Romance*, and at a relatively early stage in the formation of this elusive text. This had been pointed out over a century ago by Moses Gaster,³⁰ but has been subsequently almost entirely ignored.³¹

Withdrawing from there, we came to the Port of Lysus, and we found a very high mountain; I went up and saw fine houses full of gold and silver. And I also saw a great precinct wall of sapphire with 150 steps leading up to a round temple with 100 sapphire pillars round it. Inside and out there were figures of demigods carved in relief: bacchae, satyrs, and female initiates playing the flute and performing their strange ecstatic dancing. And the old man Maron was on a donkey. In the middle of the temple there lay a couch with golden legs laid with cushions, and on it a man wrapped round about with a silken cloth. I could not see what he looked like, for he was all wrapped up, but I did see how strong he was and that he had a huge body. And in the middle of the temple a hundred-pound golden chain was hanging and a radiant golden wreath. Instead of fire, a precious stone offered light that lit up the whole temple. There was a cage of gold hung from the

ceiling with a bird in it the size of a dove, and as if with a human voice, it cried out to me in Greek: 'Alexander, from now on stop matching yourself with the divine, and return to your own palace, and do not rush headlong into climbing the paths of heaven.' I wanted to take it down with the chandelier to send to you, but I saw the man on the couch stirring, as if to get up, and my friends told me 'Don't, your majesty, for it is sacred.' Going out into the precinct, I saw lying there two mixing bowls of chased gold holding sixty firkins – which we measured out at the banquet. I gave orders for the whole force to be present and hold a feast. . . . As we and the men were reclining for it, suddenly there was a sound like a great thunder from a mass of flutes, cymbals, pan-pipes, trumpets, drums and lyres. And the whole mountain was wreathed in smoke, as if a great lightning storm had hit us.

The first point in this curious account is that the quester is evidently unworthy of the unearthly and sacred place he has stumbled upon. Like any Graal castle it has its mysterious hooded figure;³² it has two striking golden bowls, from whom Alexander and his court are evidently about to be served, before being driven out by a sudden event. We might think of scenarios where the knight who fails to attain the Graal is left deserted and abandoned the next day when the castle itself has disappeared.³³ Even the best of earthly heroes are found wanting in the presence of the vessel. We should however emphasise that much of the description is simply that of any sumptuous oriental court, with strong Dionysiac colouring, perhaps simply superimposed.³⁴ One notes the voice of the talking bird, perhaps corresponding to the characteristic disembodied 'heavenly warnings' in the Graal texts. We have a passable pagan equivalent text, and at a date safely before the end of Antiquity. Once more, as in the tale of Gauanes, this motif is confirmed as pre-Christian. We should however be very much less confident than Gaster himself, who claimed that the Graal tradition derives specifically from Alexander's *Iter ad Paradisum*, of which this episode would constitute a part. The occurrence of the 'Gaal incident' in Herodotus is itself sufficient to disprove this, once more on chronological grounds.

Aside from a 'Gaal visit' episode, we note a number of broader tendencies in the choice of material. Alexander's conquests in the West are greatly exaggerated, like those of the British Arthur in Geoffrey of Monmouth: as the latter is credited with conquest in Scandinavia and elsewhere, so Alexander is held to conquer Italy, impossibly.³⁵ Both too have to have a confrontation with the sacred of an exotic and unusual sort: Alexander confronts the gymnosophists in India – an actual occurrence testified in reliable Alexander-histories, but an obvious basis also for exotic elaboration; while Arthur is often worsted in Saints' Lives for his secular greed, licence and ambition.³⁶ Both too are worsted by women, Alexander in the episode where he is captured by Candace and shown

that even mighty kings can fall to a woman's wiles, and Arthur when he and his knights are subjected to kidnap plots by Morgan le Fay, his magician (half)-sister.

Both too receive portentous premonition of their death: Alexander from an angel, rather like the Cyrus of the *Cyropaedia*; but they differ very significantly in their ending: the *Alexander Romance* makes deliberate propaganda for Alexander's burial in Egypt, whereas it is only much later that Glastonbury attempts propaganda from the mysterious disappearance of Arthur.³⁷

One notes, then, that even the nature of the legendary accretions on Arthur and Alexander are very similar in nature. They are not without tabloid tastes; and they suggest something at least of the appetites of the reading or listening public at a subliterate level.³⁸ What they unfortunately cannot do is throw much light on what was there in Arthur's case to elaborate on in the first place. Both enjoyed phenomenal prestige, Alexander indeed as much among his enemies as among his friends; both seem to have enjoyed a *Nachleben* in the Near East as well as a Western reputation; and both gave rise to a phenomenal aura that goes well beyond ordinary military prestige. Both too break into medieval French Romance, Alexander not just in the *Roman d'Alexandre* itself, but as, for example, a character in Chrétien de Troyes' happy-ending Tristan-style Romance Cligès.

One major divergence is brought about no doubt by Alexander's early death: King Arthur has the feel of an ageing and increasingly sedentary warrior presiding over a settled kingdom or empire, increasingly dependent on others to do his bidding as the grand old man, like Charlemagne in the *Song of Roland*. That is not the role of Alexander, always the man of unrelenting action and curiosity. One notes too the cunning roles of Alexander in the *Romance*: he is closer in this respect to the resourceful Tristan figure than to Arthur or the more eminent members of his court.

Even Alexander, then, must join the muster-roll of those whose legends have drawn on 'Bear's Son' material. It is a task for the future to account for why individual figures of quite exceptional impact should be linked to the tale by this variant motif and not that. But it is unwise to leave the tale-pattern out of account in considering any heroic figure and his template.

APPENDIX 3

JACK THE GIANT KILLER AND KING ARTHUR

Opie and Opie (1974) print a chapbook story set in the age of Arthur and dated perhaps around 1760–65. But it offers us a particularly clear popular version of the story of Gyges discussed in Chapter 6 above:

In the Reign of King Arthur, near the Land's End of England, namely, the Country of Cornwall, there lived a wealthy Farmer, who had one only Son, commonly known by the Name of Jack the Giant-Killer. . . .

King Arthur's Son desired of his Father to furnish him with a certain Sum of Money, that he might go seek his Fortune in the Principality of Wales, where a beautiful Lady lived, whom he heard was possessed with seven evil spirits; the King his Father counselled him against it, yet he would not be persuaded from it, so that he granted what he requested, which was one Horse loaded with Money, with another for himself to ride on. Thus he went forth without any Attendance, and after several Days' travel he came to a Market-town in Wales, where he beheld a vast Concourse of People gathered together, the King's Son demanded the Reason of it, and was told, That they had arrested a Corpse for many large Sums of Money, which the Deceased owed when he died. The King's Son replied, It is Pity that Creditors should be so cruel. Go bury the Dead, said he, and let his Creditors come to my Lodging, and their Debts shall be discharged.

Accordingly they came, and in such great Numbers, that before Night he had almost left himself Pennyless; now Jack the Giant-Killer being there, and seeing the Generosity of the King's Son, he was highly taken with him, and desired to be his Servant; it was agreed upon, and the next Morning they set forward. . . .

The King's Son said, Jack, since we have no Money, where can we think to lodge this Night? Jack replied, Master, we will do well enough, for I have an Uncle lives within two Miles of this Place, he is a huge and monstrous Giant with three Heads. . . .

O, but quoth Jack, here is the King's Son a coming with a thousand Men in Armour to kill you, and destroy all that you have. O cousin Jack, that is heavy News indeed; I have a large Vault under Ground, where I will immediately run and hide myself, and thou shalt lock, bolt, and bar me in, and keep the Keys till the King's Son is gone.

Now Jack having secured the Giant, he returns and fetches his master, and were both heartily merry with Wine and of the Dainties which the house afforded. That Night they rested in pleasant Lodgings, while the poor Giant lay trembling in a Vault under the Ground.

In the Morning Jack furnished his master with a fresh Supply of Gold and Silver, and then set him three Miles forward of his Journey, concluding he was then pretty well out of the Smell of the Giant, and then returned and let his Uncle out of his Hole, who asked Jack what he would give him for his Care, in Regard to see his Castle was not demolished. Why, quoth Jack, I desire nothing but the old rusty Sword, Coat and Slippers, which are at your Bed's-head. Quoth the Giant thou shalt have them, and prithee keep them for my Sake, for they are Things of excellent Use. The Coat will keep you invisible, the Cap will furnish you with Knowledge, the Sword cut in sunder whatever you strike, the Shoes are of extraordinary Swiftmess; they may be Serviceable to you, and therefore take them with all my Heart. Jack takes them, and so follows his master.

Jack having overtaken his Master, they soon arrived at the Lady's House, and finding the King's Son to be Suitor, prepared a Banquet for him. . . . The next Night she saluted the young Prince, telling him, He must show her the Lips tomorrow Morning that she kiss'd last Night, or lose his head. He replied, if you kiss'd none but mine I will. 'Tis neither here nor there, said She, if you do not, Death is your Portion.

At midnight she went as before, and was angry with Lucifer, for letting the Handkerchief go. But now, I shall be too hard for the young Prince, for I will kiss thy Lips, which she did.

Jack standing by, with his Sword of Sharpness, cut off the Devil's Head, and brought it under his invisible Coat to his master, who laid it at the End of his Bolster, and in the Morning when she came up, he pulled it out by the Horns, and showed her the devil's Lips which she kiss'd last.

Thus having answered her twice, the Inchantment broke, and the Evil Spirit left her, at which Time she appeared in all her Beauty, a sweet and virtuous Creature.

They were married the next Morning, and soon after returned with Joy to the Court of King Arthur, when Jack for his good Service, was made one of the Knights of the Round Table.

It might be contended that King Arthur's son here is not equivalent to the Gyges of the ancient Lydian tale. But in fact the latter is the great-nephew and adopted son of one Ardus. It is therefore reasonable to describe him as the son of an Arthur, who obtains a Giant's mistress by means of a magic means of invisibility. In the Gyges tale there is no independent helper to correspond to Jack.

APPENDIX 4

TOXARIS' THIRD TALE

It is generally assumed that whatever the availability of stories about King Arthur, the actual origins of chivalric literature must fall between the heroic *Chansons de Geste* of the Roland Author, and the chivalric inventions of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chrétien himself.¹ It is therefore useful to invite Arthurian scholars and students of comparative literature to note a further text from the second century AD, roughly contemporary with the Tristan text of Iamblichus. This is the third Scythian tale in the *Toxaris* of Lucian of Samosata, still short enough to regard as a prose novella and, indeed, to quote in its entirety.

(44) I will tell you about a third case, Mnesippus: the friendship of Macentes, Lonchates and Arsacomas. This Arsacomas fell in love with Mazaea the daughter of Leucanor, the king of Bosphorus, when he was on a mission over the tribute which the Bosphoran people pay us in perpetuity and which at that point was already more than two months overdue. So when he saw Mazaea, a tall and beautiful girl, he was smitten and in a bad way. The business of the payments had already been settled, and the king was affording him an audience and entertaining him, and he was already sending him off. It is the custom in the Bosphorus for suitors to ask for brides at dinner and state the grounds on which they consider themselves worthy to be accepted as bridegrooms, and at this time there happened to be many suitors present at the dinner, kings and princes: there was Tigrapates, ruler of the Lazi; Adyrmachus ruler of Machlyene, and many others. And each suitor has to proclaim that he has come as a suitor, and must then recline in silence among the rest. And when they have finished dining, he has to call for a cup and make a libation on the table and woo the girl, recommending himself warmly, as someone noble, rich or powerful.

(45) So after many suitors in accordance with this custom had poured their libations, asked for the girl's hand and listed their kingdoms and wealth, Arsacomas asked for the cup but did not pour, for it is not our custom to pour out wine, but this strikes us as an insult

to the god. But drinking it in one gulp he said: 'Your majesty, give me your daughter Mazaea, as I am much more eligible than these men in terms of wealth and possessions.' Leucanor was amazed, as he knew Arsacomas was a poor man and only one of the ordinary Scythians, and he asked: 'How many cattle or wagons have you, Arsacomas? For those things are your idea of wealth.' 'No, I do not have wagons or flocks, but I have two worthy friends like no other Scythians.' At that point, then, they laughed at these claims, and paid no attention to him, thinking he was drunk. Adyrmachus was deemed worthy, and in the morning he was due to take away the bride along the river Maeotis to Machlyene. (46) But Arsacomas came back home and told his friends that he had been dishonoured by the king and laughed at at the banquet, since they considered him to be a pauper. 'And yet', he said, 'I gave him an account of all my wealth – you, Lonchates and Macentes, and your friendship much better and more secure than rulership over the Bosporus. Then as I went through all this they guffawed and despised you, and entrusted Adyrmachus of Machlyene with taking off the bride, because he is said to have ten gold cups and eighty four-berth wagons and many sheep and cattle. So, then, they preferred flocks and decorated cups and heavy wagons to good men.

And I, my friends, am doubly distressed: for I am in love with Mazaea, and this arrogance in front of so many men has greatly distressed me. And I consider that you have also been wronged in equal measure. For each of you has a third share in our dishonour, since from the start of our friendship we are one man, sharing the same pains and pleasures.' 'Not only that', Lonchates added, 'but each one of us is utterly disgraced when you have suffered such humiliation.'

(47) 'How then', said Macentes, 'shall we treat the present situation?' 'Let us divide the task', said Macentes. 'And I promise to bring Arsacomas the head of Leucanor, while you have to restore him his bride.' 'Very well then', said Lonchates, 'but you, Arsacomas, in the meantime, as it is likely after this that we shall need a war-party – must remain here and collect and make ready weapons and horses and as large a force as you can muster. And you should easily raise a great army, as you yourself are brave and we have many relatives, and especially if you were to sit on the oxhide.' They made these decisions, and Lonchates at once set off for the Bosporus, just as he was, while Macentes made for the Machlyans, both of them mounted (*hippotes hekateros*). But Arsacomas stayed at home, negotiated with his peers, and armed a force from his relations, and finally he also sat on the hide.

(48) Their custom regarding the hide is this: whenever a person has a grievance against another party and wants revenge, but sees that he is not strong enough on his own, he sacrifices a bull, cuts up the meat and cooks it, and himself spreads out the hide on the ground and sits

on it, holding his hands behind his back like a man bound by the elbows. And among us that is the most forceful appeal for help. The bull-meat is set beside them, and the man's relations and anyone else who wishes takes a share, setting his right foot on the hide; and he undertakes according to his means, that one will provide five horsemen without food or pay, another ten, another more, another as many infantry, heavily or lightly armed, as he can, another again, if he is very poor, only himself. So at times a great force is mustered on the hide, and this sort of assemblage is very reliable at holding together and difficult for its enemies to oppose, and it is acting on oath, for setting foot on the hide is an oath.

So Arsacomas was engaged in this, and he had assembled around five thousand horsemen and twenty thousand heavy and light armed infantry. (49) But Lonchates arrived in Bosporus unnoticed and went to the king as he was attending to official business and said he had come from the Scythian commonwealth, and that he had an important private message as well. The king told him to speak: 'The Scythians', he said, 'make this normal routine request, that your herdsmen do not graze over onto the plain, but only as far as the rough terrain. The robbers that are making attacks on your territory they say are not sent out by order of the state, but each is stealing for his own personal gain. And if any are caught, they authorise you to punish them. That is their official dispatch; (50) I for my part give you warning that a huge attack is imminent from Arsacomas son of Mariantes, who came to you on a mission recently; he is indignant that he asked for your daughter's hand and you turned him down, and he has already been sitting six days on the hide, and has mustered no small force.' 'I myself heard', said Leucanor, 'of a force being mustered on the hide, but I was unaware that it is directed against us or that Arsacomas is the instigator.' 'No, it is against you yourself. But I am an enemy of Arsacomas, and he is annoyed because I am held in greater honour by our elders and am considered to be above him in all respects. But if you would promise me your other daughter Barcetis, as I am in other respects not unworthy of you, I will soon bring you his head.' 'I promise', said the king, who had become quite alarmed, for he realised the cause of Arsacomas' anger over the marriage, and in any case he was ever in fear of the Scythians.

Lonchates replied: 'Swear that you will honour the agreement, and not go back on it when the business is done.' And when the king lifted up his hands to heaven and was about to swear, Lonchates said: 'Not here, in case some onlooker suspects the reason for our oath, but let us go into the temple of Ares here and swear behind closed doors with nobody within earshot. For if Arsacomas were to find out, I fear he might have me as the first sacrifice of the war, since he is already

surrounded by no small force.' 'Let us go in', said the king, 'And you people, stand as far away as possible. And no-one is to enter the temple without my summons.'

And when they went in and the guards withdrew, Lonchates drew his sword: he put his other hand over the king's mouth to prevent him from shouting, and struck him in the chest, then cutting off his head he put it under his cloak and went out, all the while holding a bogus conversation with him and saying he would soon be back, as if the king had sent him on some errand. And so he arrived at the place where he had left his horse tethered, and mounting he rode off to Scythia. No-one went in pursuit, for the Bosporans were for a long time unaware of what had happened, and when they did find out, they were divided over the succession.

(51) Lonchates, then, did all this and fulfilled his promise to Arsacomas by giving him Leucanor's head. As for Macentes, he heard on his way what had happened in Bosporus, and when he arrived in Machlyene he was the first to bring news of the king's murder. 'And the city, Adyrmachus', he said, 'invites you as the son-in-law to claim the throne. So you must move forward and take over the government, by appearing amid the confusion. But the girl should follow with the wagons: for that way you will more easily win over the Bosporan people, when they see Leucanor's daughter. I am an Alan, related to the girl on her mother's side, for Leucanor married an Alan girl, Masteira. And now I come to you from Masteira's brothers in Alan country: they urge you to ride as fast as possible to Bosporus and not wait for the government to fall to Eubiotus, the bastard brother of Leucanor, who is always a friend of the Scythians and hates the Alans. . . .

(52) And now, Adyrmachus' he said, 'I am prepared if you wish to ride to the Bosporus with you, or stay behind, if necessary, and escort the girl.' 'That would be better', said Adyrmachus, 'that you as a blood-relation should conduct Mazaea. For if you go with us to Bosporus, we should only have one more horseman. But if you were to take my wife, you would perform the work of many.'

This was done, and Adyrmachus rode off, after handing over Mazaea, still a virgin, to Macentes. He conducted her on her wagon by day, but at nightfall he put her on his horse (he had taken care to have only one other rider in attendance) – and he leapt into the saddle himself and no longer rode beside lake Maeotis, but turned off into the interior, keeping the Mitraean mountains on his left, and letting the girl rest at intervals, he arrived two days later in Scythia from Machlyene. And his horse, when he stopped running, paused for a moment and fell dead, (53) but Macentes handed over Mazaea to Arsacomas and said, 'Here is my promise too fulfilled!'

Arsacomas was dumbfounded by so unexpected a sight and was attempting to thank him: 'Stop', Macentes broke in, 'treating me as someone different from yourself. To thank me for my part in this is as if the wounded left hand were to thank the right for looking after it and treating it kindly while it was weak. So we should be behaving ridiculously if after bonding long ago and uniting as far as possible into one, we should still think it a great matter for part of us to do something on behalf of the whole body. For he was doing it on his behalf, as part of the whole that has benefited.'

That was how Macentes silenced Arsacomas when he offered him thanks. (54) But when Adymachus heard their plot, he did not continue towards Bosphorus, for Eubiotus was already in control after being summoned from the Sauromatoi, where he had been living, but returned home, raised a large army, and burst through the mountains into Scythia. And Eubiotus too not much later also invaded with his full force of Greeks, and twenty thousand each of Asians and Sarmatians he had levied. Eubiotus and Adymachus joined forces, making ninety thousand men in all, a third of them mounted archers.

As for us – and I myself was part of the expedition, since I had covenanted on the hide on that occasion a hundred self-sufficient cavalry – we amounted to not much less than thirty thousand including our cavalry, and we waited for their attack; our commander-in-chief was Arsacomas. And when we saw him approaching, we moved forward to confront them, letting loose our cavalry in the van. There was a long drawn-out and hard-fought engagement and our side was beginning to give and the phalanx had been broken, and at length the whole Scythian force was split in two, one part started to withdraw, though it was not clear that they had been defeated, and the withdrawal looked like a retreat. For the Alans for the most part did not dare to pursue. The other, smaller portion, the Alans and Machlyans, surrounded us and were cutting us down on all sides by releasing their arrows and javelins, so that those of us who were surrounded were in dire straights, and many of them had already shot their weapons.

(55) Among them were both Lonchates and Macentes as it happened, both already wounded as they braved the front line, the one in the thigh with a buttspike, Lonchates, the other with an axe wound in the head and a javelin in the shoulder. When Arsacomas saw this, from our other side, he thought it dreadful to be away and leave his friends, and he applied his spurs to the horse and drove through the enemy with an upraised battle-axe, so that the Machlyans could not withstand the fury of his onslaught, but divided they allowed him to charge through.

And Arsacomas encouraged his friends and cheered on all the others, and dashed on Adyrmachus, and striking him with his axe beside his neck he split him in two to his belt. When he fell the rest of the Machlyans were scattered, followed not long afterwards by the Alans and the Greeks after that. So we won our victory once more, and we might have pursued them a great distance, killing as we went, had not night put an end to the engagement.

Next day suppliants arrived from the enemy asking to make friends with us: the Bosporans promised to pay us twice the tribute, the Machlyans promised hostages, and the Alans, in compensation for their attack, undertook to subdue the Sindians for us, who had been in revolt for some time. On these conditions we agreed, after obtaining as a priority the assent of Arsacomas and Lonchates; and with the peace they settled all the details.

Such, Mnesippus, are the heroic deeds that Scythians dare to do on behalf of their friends.

This is not necessarily 'Arthurian' in feel; but it is undoubtedly the product of a warrior culture turned in the direction of romance: it is not too far from the world of *Culhwch and Olwen* in the *Mabinogion*. It emphasises the sort of Scythian matériel, particularly the wagons, that are least in evidence in Arthurian Romance. But above all it is a reminder that there were indeed 'Scythian tales' in at least some significant sense, and not just ethnographic descriptions of Scythia; if we were to translate *bippotes* as 'knight' rather than 'horseman' or 'cavalryman' we should be very close to an Arthurian ethos, as we already are here to the world of the Narts. Lucian actually undercuts the deliberately realistic and matter-of fact tone of the tale, by having the Greek listener Mnesippus tease his Scythian narrator about the credibility of the story, whose events are *panu tragika* to the ears of a Greek.²

APPENDIX 5

THE EARLIEST TRISTAN TEXT: RHODANES AND SINONIS

There are two recent translations into English of Iamblichus' *Babyloniaca*, by Gerald Sandy and by Winkler and Stevens, but in both cases as the summary of a Greek novel. Here it should be seen as a first translation of the first European Tristan story, as the Patriarch Photius (*Bibliotheca Codex* 94: 73b–78a) read it in the ninth century.

The *dramatis personae* of (Iamblichus') plot are Sinonis and Rhodanes; she is beautiful and he is handsome: they love each other within the convention of marriage and are in fact an engaged couple; and Garmus king of Babylon, whose wife has died and who falls in love with Sinonis and is pressing to marry her. Sinonis turns him down and is bound in a golden chain; and Rhodanes, because of the king's love, is put up on a cross by Damas and Sakas, the royal eunuchs. But Sinonis gets him quickly down from the cross, and both take to flight: he is avoiding the cross and she the marriage. And because of this Sakas and Damas have their nose and ears cut off; they are sent off to find the couple. They go off in different directions to search. Rhodanes and co. are nearly caught beside a meadow by the pursuing Damas. There was a fisherman who pointed out the shepherds who under torture were forced to point out the meadow where Rhodanes actually found gold, revealed by the inscription on the lion stele.

And a goat-shaped apparition falls in love with Sinonis, and for this reason Rhodanes and co. leave the meadow. And Damas finds Sinonis' garland from the meadow and sends it to Garmus to console him. And in their flight Rhodanes and co. meet an old woman at a hut, and they hide in a cave that was hollowed out to a length of thirty stades (nearly three miles); and the mouth was blocked by a thicket. And Damas and his men arrive and interrogate the old woman, who faints at the sight of a drawn sword. They capture the horses ridden by Rhodanes and Sinonis, and the squadron find the place where Sinonis and Rhodanes were hiding: one of the servants lets fall a bronze shield from

above and the hollow echo gives away their hiding place; the pursuers dig around the entrance. Damas gives all his instructions in a loud voice, warning those inside; and they rush off to the shelter of the innermost recesses, and come out at the other entrance. And a swarm of wild bees attacks the diggers, and honey drips down also onto the fugitives. The bees had fed on a serpent and both they and their honey had been poisoned. The bees struck the men at the entrance with their stings, and even killed some of them.

Overcome by hunger, Rhodanes and co. licked the honey and suffered bouts of diarrhoea and fell like corpses by the roadside. The soldiers ran off, suffering from the bees' attack, but they persisted in their pursuit of Rhodanes and co., and seeing their quarry lying there they passed by, taking them for genuine corpses.

In the cave, they had cut Sinon's hair to draw up drops of water for themselves. And Damas found the hair and sent it to Garmus, to show that they were closing in to capture the pair. And as Rhodanes and Sinon lay beside the road, the army as it passed by the apparent corpses followed native custom and threw down their cloaks to cover them: one man would throw down meat, another bread, as they passed by. After being gutted by the honey they rose with difficulty; crows quarrelling over the meat woke first Rhodanes, then Sinon. And so they got up and made their way in the opposite direction to the soldiers, so as to avoid giving the impression that they were on the run. They found two asses and got up on them and loaded them with their luggage taken from the funeral offerings the army had thrown to them. Then they arrived at an inn, and escaped from there, and at the time when the market filled up they put in at another staging-place.

Now two brothers had been murdered there and the pair were accused of murder, but were released, as the elder of the brothers, who had murdered the younger, had accused them, but had himself committed suicide and so acquitted them. Rhodanes took the poison without being noticed. They arrived at the house of a robber who robbed the passers-by and made a meal of them. And when soldiers had been dispatched by Damas and the robber was arrested, they set the house on fire. And surrounded by the fire, they escaped destruction with difficulty by slaughtering the asses and using their corpses to form a pathway through the fire.

They were seen at night by those who set fire to the place, and asked who they were, they said that they were ghosts of those murdered by the robber, and because of their pallor, their lean appearance and their weak voices they convinced the soldiers and terrified them. And they fled once more from there and came across a girl being led for burial, and they ran to see it. And an old Chaldean arrived and forbade the burial, saying that the girl was still alive. And so it turned

out. And he also gave Rhodanes too a prophecy, that he would be king. The girl's tomb was left empty, and with it many garments that were to be burned at the tomb, and also food and drink. And Rhodanes and co. feasted on these, and took some of the clothes, and fell asleep in the girl's tomb. But those who had set the robber's house on fire realised at daybreak that they had been tricked, and they followed the tracks of Rhodanes and Sinonis, suspecting that they were accomplices of the robber. And when they followed their tracks to the tomb, and saw them lying in it; and seeing them motionless because they were bound fast in sleep and wine, they thought they were looking at corpses and left them alone, puzzled as to why the tracks led there.

Rhodanes and co. leave (the tomb) and cross the sweet, clear river destined for the king of Babylon to drink. And Sinonis sells the clothes and is arrested as a tomb-robber, and is brought before Soraechus, son of Soraechus the tax-collector, and surnamed the just. And he wants to send her to king Garmus because of her beauty, and for that reason Rhodanes and Sinonis mix the brothers' poison. For both would prefer to die than to face Garmus. Soraechus receives word from the servant of what Rhodanes and Sinonis are planning, and Soraechus secretly empties out the deadly poison, and fills the kylix with a soporific drug. And he takes them, after they have drunk and are asleep, and drives them to the king. And as they near the end of their journey, Rhodanes is alarmed by a dream and shouts and wakens Sinonis. And she strikes her breast with a sword, and Soraechus asks them to tell him everything; they swear him to secrecy and tell him, and he sets them free, and points out to them the temple of Aphrodite on the island, where Sinonis will be able to heal her wound.

And by way of digression he explains about the temple and the island, and that Euphrates and Tigris flowing around it form an island, and that the priestess of Aphrodite there had three children, Euphrates and Tigris and Mesopotamia, a girl who was ugly to look at at birth, but whose appearance was made beautiful by Aphrodite. On her account there was a contest between three lovers, and a judgement was made among them. Borochus or Bocchorus was the judge, the best judge of that generation. And the judgement and the quarrel was that Mesopotamia had given the cup she had drunk from to one of them, to the second she had given the crown of flowers from her hair, and the third she had kissed. And although the one who received the kiss won the verdict, their quarrel was no less intense, until in their strife they killed one another.

He speaks then by way of parenthesis about the temple of Aphrodite, and says that it is required of the women who travel to the temple that they confess in public the dreams they have seen in the temple. At this point he gives a detailed account of Pharnouchos

and Pharsiris and Tanais, who gave his name to the river. He says that to those who inhabit this place and the land of Tanais, the mysteries of Aphrodite are those of Tanais and Pharsiris.

On the island mentioned Tigris ate a rose and died; for there was a beetle lying concealed in the still folded petals of the rose. And the mother of the boy resorted to enchantments and believed him to have become a hero.

And Iamblichus goes through types of magic, magic by grasshoppers, lions and mice: mysteries receive their name from the word *mys*, for the mouse magic was the first kind. He also mentions magic from hail, from snakes and necromancy and ventriloquism, which he also says that the Greeks call Eurycles and the Babylonians Sacchoura.

The author says that he himself is Babylonian, and that he received a Greek education, and that his main work was done in the time of Soaemus the Achaemenid and Arsacid, who was king from a royal line, but also became a member of the Roman Senate, then consul, then once more king of Great Armenia; this is the reign he says he worked in. He goes on to say that Marcus Aurelius was reigning, and when Marcus sent his brother and co-emperor Verus to fight the Parthians, that he himself foresaw the war, both its occurrence and its outcome. And that Vologeses fled across the Euphrates and the Tigris, and that the Parthian territory came under Roman rule.

But as for Tigris and Euphrates, the two sons of the priestess looked like one another, and Rhodanes looked like both of them. And this lad, as I said, having been killed through the rose, Rhodanes arrives at the island with Sinonis and the mother proclaimed that her dead son had come back to life; Rhodanes played along with this, amused at the naivety of the islanders.

Damas is informed about Rhodanes' adventure and all that Soraechus had done for (the couple). His informant was the doctor whom Soraechus had sent for secretly to heal Sinonis' wound. Because of this Soraechus is arrested and brought before Garmus. And the informer himself was sent with a letter from Damas to the priest of Aphrodite, instructing him to arrest Sinonis and her companions. The doctor crossed the river according to custom on the sacred camel, with the letter in its right ear. And the informer ended up drowned in the river, while the camel crossed to the island and Rhodanes and co. found out everything when they took Damas' letter from the camel's ear.

They took flight for this reason from the island and met Soraechus being brought to Garmos, and they put up at the same inn. And Rhodanes bribed Soraechus' guards, and they were murdered, and Soraechus fled with them in reward for the services he had done them previously.

Damas arrested the priest of Aphrodite, and interrogated him about Sinonis, and finally the priest was condemned to become the public executioner instead of the priest.

The executioner's customs and obligations [are described]. Euphrates was arrested, because his father the priest mistook him for Rhodanes and called him by that name. And his sister Mesopotamia took flight. And Euphrates was brought before Sakas and cross-examined about Sinonis; for he was mistaken for Rhodanes. Sakas sent word to Garmus that Rhodanes has been arrested and Sinonis was about to be. For Euphrates, mistaken for Rhodanes, said that Sinonis had fled while he was being arrested (he too was forced to call his sister Mesopotamia Sinonis).

Rhodanes and Sinonis fleeing together with Soraechus put up at a farmer's house: he had a beautiful daughter just widowed, who had cut her hair short in mourning for her late husband. She was sent to sell the golden chain, which Rhodanes and co. had been carrying from the prison. And [so] the farmer's daughter went off to the jeweller's. And he saw that she was beautiful and recognised the part of the chain which he himself had made, and her short hair, and mistook her for Sinonis, and sent a message to Damas and secretly kept an eye on her as she left. But she suspects what had happened and fled to a deserted inn.

At this point we are told about the girl known as Trophime and her slave lover and murderer, and the gold ornament, the slave's frightening acts, and his suicide, and how the farmer's daughter was covered in the suicide's blood, and how she took fright at this and ran off, and the guards took to flight as well; the girl arrived at her father's house and told what had happened. And Rhodanes and co. fled from there. And the jeweller's letter to Garmus is mentioned, telling him that Sinonis had been found, and as proof the chain he bought and his other suspicions about the farmer's daughter.

Rhodanes as he ran off kissed the farmer's daughter, and Sinonis flew into a rage over it: first she suspected the kiss, then when she wiped the blood from Rhodanes' lips, which had been sprinkled over him when he kissed her, Sinonis was sure. For this reason Sinonis sought to kill the girl, and turned back and dashed towards her like a madwoman. And Soraechus followed, since he was unable to hold back her mad dash. And they came to the house of a man who was rich but licentious, Setapus, who fell in love with Sinonis and tried to assault her. She promised to return his love and during that same night, as he was making his first move, she killed him with a sword. She had the courtyard door opened, leaving Soraechus who did not know what had happened. When Soraechus found she had gone he pursued her outside and captured her with the help of Setapus' slaves,

whom he had hired to prevent the killing of the farmer's daughter. And having captured her he took her in a cart he had also made ready and drove her back.

But as they made their way back, the slaves of Setapus, now that they had seen their master lying dead, angrily confronted them: they arrested Sinonis and tied her up and took her to Garmus for punishment. And Soraechus brought word to Rhodanes of this disaster: he sprinkled dust on his head and tore his clothes. And Rhodanes prepared to kill himself, but Soraechus prevented him.

Garmus received Sakas' letter informing him that Rhodanes had been captured, and the one from the jeweller that Sinonis was being held, and he was overjoyed and offered sacrifice and prepared for the wedding, and published a proclamation all over for all prisoners to be released and let go. And Sinonis, brought by Setapus' slaves as a prisoner, was released and let go because of the general proclamation. Garmus ordered Damas to be handed over to the executioner, whose office he had transferred to the priest. He was angry with Damas because Rhodanes and Sinonis, so he supposed, had been arrested by others. And Damas' brother Monasus took Damas' own place.

There is a description of Berenike, the daughter of the Egyptian King, and her wild and licentious love-affairs. And how she came to befriend Mesopotamia, and that later Sakas arrested Mesopotamia, and was brought before Garmus at the same time as her brother Euphrates. Garmus received word from the goldsmith that Sinonis had escaped, and he ordered him to be executed, and that those guarding her and charged with escorting her should be buried alive with their wives and children.

A Hyrcanian hound, which belonged to Rhodanes, found in that awful house the corpses of the unfortunate girl and the slave assassin with the ill-fated love-affair. It ate first the body of the slave, then little by little that of the girl. And Sinonis' father arrived at the place, and recognising Rhodanes' dog and the half-eaten woman he killed the dog in honour of Sinonis and hanged himself with a rope, after burying the remains of the girl and writing in the dog's blood 'Here lies Sinonis the beautiful'. Soraechus and Rhodanes arrived, and seeing the dog slaughtered on the tomb and her father hanging and the inscription on the tomb, Rhodanes struck himself with a first stroke and wrote in his own blood on Sinonis' Epitaph 'And the handsome Rhodanes', and Soraechus hanged himself with a noose.

And meanwhile Rhodanes began to inflict the final blow, but the farmer's daughter arrived and shouted loudly: 'The corpse, Rhodanes, is not Sinonis!' And she ran up and cut Soraechus' noose and removed Rhodanes' sword and persuaded him with difficulty, telling the story of the unfortunate girl and the buried treasure which she was on her

way to recover. Sinonis, released from her bonds, hurried back to the farmer's house, still in a mad rage against the girl. And not finding her, she asked her father. He told her the road, and dashed off in pursuit with the unsheathed sword. And when she came across Rhodanes lying on the ground, and the girl alone sitting beside him and trying to heal the wound in his chest (for Soraechus had gone to fetch a doctor), she was filled even more with a jealous rage, and set upon the girl. Rhodanes overcame the pain of his wound in the face of her violence and restrained her, seizing the sword from her. And in a rage she leapt out of the house and ran off in a fit of madness, only saying to Rhodanes 'I invite you today to Garmus' wedding!'

Soraechus arrived and found out everything: he consoled Rhodanes, and when they had healed the wound they sent the girl with the treasure to her father. Euphrates was brought to Garmus as Rhodanes, and Mesopotamia as Sinonis. Soraechus was also brought, as well as the real Rhodanes. And when Garmus saw that Mesopotamia was not the real Sinonis, he handed her over to Zobares to cut off her head beside the Euphrates, so that, he said, no other should usurp Sinonis' name. And Zobares drank from an erotic spring and was held fast by a love for Sinonis and saved her, and brought her to Berenike, who was now Queen of Egypt since the death of her father. And Berenike celebrated a 'marriage' with Mesopotamia: because of her there was the threat of war between Garmus and Berenike.

Euphrates was handed over to his father as executioner and was saved when he was recognised. He himself discharged his father's duties, and his father was not defiled by human blood. And later, he left the house disguised as the executioner's daughter and escaped.

At this point the writer describes the customs and obligations relating to the girl who slept with the executioner, and the business of the farmer's daughter, how she was dragged off, since Sinonis, now married to the king of Syria, nursed a great grudge against her. And she condemned her to sleep with the public executioner, and we are told that she slept in the executioner's compound and became the companion of Euphrates, who impersonated her and escaped from the compound, while she performed the duties of the executioner instead of Euphrates.

And so events turn out as follows: Soraechus was handed over to be crucified. And the place was specified as where Rhodanes and Sinonis first encamped, in the meadow at the fountain where Rhodanes found the hidden treasure, which Soraechus, being led to be crucified, told him where to find. An army of Alans which Garmus had not paid, was discontented and staying in the area where Soraechus was about to be crucified; they drove off Soraechus' guards and freed him. And he found the treasure he had been told about, and by artful cunning he

retrieved it, persuading the Alans he had received divine instructions about this and other things; and gradually he convinced them to consider him their king, and he fought and defeated Garmus' army. But that was later. But when Soraechus was sent to the cross, then Rhodanes too was led once more to his original cross and crucified by Garmus, garlanded and dancing in person. And Garmus, drunk and dancing around the cross with the flute-girls, rejoiced with delight and indulged himself.

While this was happening, Sakas sent a letter to Garmus that Sinonis was marrying the king of Assyria, still very young. And Rhodanes up above was delighted, while Garmus prepared to kill himself, but checking himself he brought Rhodanes down from the cross against his will (for he preferred to die). He had him dressed in uniform and sent him as general in the war he was waging against the king of Syria – as lover against rival, and made a show of friendship and wrote a secret letter to his subordinates, to kill Rhodanes if he won and Sinonis was captured. Rhodanes did win and recovered Sinonis, and became king of Babylon. And a swallow prophesied this. For when Garmus was there and sent Rhodanes to war, an eagle pursued a kite; but she escaped the eagle and the kite got her. At this point the sixteenth book ends.

APPENDIX 6

MYTHOLOGY IN THE 'NENNIAN' BATTLE-LIST

T. Green¹ has recently emphasised the possibility of mythological content in the battle-list at *Historia Brittonum* 56: he draws attention to the Tree-Battle in the early Welsh poem *Kat Godeu*, and suggests a link with the battle of the Calydonian forest in 'Nennius'; and the fight of Arthur with the 'Gray Wolf' at Tryfrwyd in *Pa Gur*² ('Nennian' Tribruit) is similarly made to point to possible conflict with a werewolf.

These possibilities can be extended at least a little if we attach the materials to Arcadian and other classical sites. A still unidentified British battle-site in the *HB* is Bassas: at Bassae in Arcadia the temple-frieze depicts the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs; one notes that centaurs are routinely depicted as using torn-up trees as weapons,³ and so accord well with a battle involving animated trees. Centaurs themselves were associated with Arcadia as well as Thessaly, as a wild wooded country suitable to those only on the fringe of civilisation. As to the Caledonian engagement, we can note the Caledonian Hunt itself, set in Calydon in Aetolia: this is several generations after the traditional date for the reign of Arkas, but his descendant Hippothous ('Swift-Horse') did take part; and Hippothous is noted by Pausanias as having actually ruled as king from Trapezus itself.⁴ Since he was a descendant of an Arktouros, he would be entitled to an adjectival form *Arktourios. We should of course note also that Arthur himself engages in a great boar-hunt as well, duly noted in the Triads (26).

In addition, since Arkas/Arktouros has a grandfather Lycaon who does become a werewolf, in at least one source with hostile intent to Arkas whom he wishes to sacrifice,⁵ then a fight between this 'gray wolf' Lycaon⁶ and Arkas himself would be a legitimate historicisation of the myth.

As to other battles, no fewer than seven are set at rivers: we have noted Arkas/Arktouros as opponent of a flooded river in the Eumelus fragment.⁷ Such a conflict could easily be historicised as a fight at rather than with a river. (We should also note the involvement of the Arthurian analogues⁸ Theseus and Achilles in such activities, the former in the Caledonian Hunt itself, the latter in the river-battle with the Scamander in *Iliad* 21.)

Such identifications scarcely amount to certainty; but they extend the mythological possibilities of the battle-list itself, and further weaken the

certainty of any 'real' military itinerary for any 'historical' Arthur, whether in the vicinity of Cornwall or Hadrian's Wall. We can say that Arktouros had an enemy who became a werewolf; that his kingdom was a haunt of galloping tree-brandishing half-horse-men hostile to humans, whose most famous encounter was at least commemorated (but not fought) at Bassae; that at least an 'Arktourian' king of the Table people fought in the Caledonian Hunt; and that Arktouros himself conquered a flooded river to save an animated tree.

NOTES

1 THE TRADITIONAL ARTHUR

- 1 The fullest survey of the development of Arthurian literature as a whole is still R.S. Loomis' collaborative volume of 1959. The historical materials, and the history of historical debate, are well served in the superb presentations of Higham (2002) and of E.D. Kennedy (2002). A concise synthesis of *haute vulgarisation* is offered by Snyder (1998). There is further recent doxography in Lacy (1996a and 1996b). For convenient anthologies of the Celtic materials, Coe and Young (1995), and for a compendium of some of the least accessible sources in translation, White (1997). I have not attempted to keep up with the industry of new and not-so-new Arthurs, which tend to shift emphasis from one British Arthurian site or region to another, with varying degrees of plausibility: e.g. Barber and Pykitt (1997), 322–327, cf. Castleden (2000), 6f.; and now Higham (2002), 34f. The most serious 'alternative Arthur' is that of C. Scott Littleton and Linda Malcor (1994, revised edn 2000; hereafter Littleton-Malcor), for which see the discussion in Chapter 2 below.
- 2 Ashe (1968), vii. For the sentiments in the cultural context of post-war 'Britishness', Higham (2002), 26–31.
- 3 Ashe (1968), 154.
- 4 For the problems accumulating round the name, both of attribution and spelling, see most recently Higham (2002), 119–121. I have treated the traditional attribution in quotation marks throughout.
- 5 The *Annales Cambriae* give the date of the final battle of Camlann as 537 AD. The earliest date of the *Annales* themselves is late eighth century (Dumville 1977a, 176). Text in Coe and Young (1995), 13, Higham (2002), 198; detailed discussion, Higham (2002), 208–212.
- 6 On the relationship between these and their Celtic predecessors, Loomis (1959), 52–63, emphasising the role of oral tradition.
- 7 *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (1196–98), *praef.* 15; text in William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs* (1988), ed. and tr. Walsh and Kennedy.
- 8 Morris (1973) devoted less than two pages (out of over 500 pages of text) to 'the Reign of Arthur' as opposed to 'the Legend', 116f.
- 9 Morris (1973), 117.
- 10 Dumville (1977a), 192.
- 11 Charles-Edwards (1991), 19.
- 12 For a similarly rigorous approach, Padel (1994).

- 13 Castleden (2000), 189–212.
- 14 Barber and Pykitt (1997), 221–251.
- 15 Or later, in the case of Barber and Pykitt (1997), 309–318, readvancing an Arthmael son of Meurig ap Tewrig, usually dated in the next century.
- 16 E.g. Caerleon-on-Usk (Barber-Pykitt 1997), 92–95; South Cadbury (Alcock 1989, with due reservation); Roxburgh (Moffat 1999), 186–231.
- 17 For the deviation, Tatlock (1950), 221–225, without firm conclusion.
- 18 See below Chapter 6 at note 24; Chapter 5 at note 12.
- 19 For a full survey of the legend's development, Loomis (1959), 274–294; (1963).
- 20 Castleden (2000), 98, 138.
- 21 For the latter juxtaposition, cf. Alcock (1989), 161ff. (very circumspect).
- 22 Cf. Morris (1973), 123–126.
- 23 Barber-Pykitt (Brittany); Alcock (South Cadbury); Castleden (Whithorn).
- 24 Mid-Wales Camlanns (three!): Castleden (2000), 184.
- 25 Castleden (2000), 220.
- 26 E.g. Morris (1973), 116–141 *passim*.
- 27 Herodotus 2.202–210, conflating several Twelfth Dynasty Senwosrets: on 2.3, see Lloyd (1988), 16ff.
- 28 For an account of the theory, A.H. Krappe (1930), 101–137.
- 29 For perspectives see now Lapidge and Dumville (1984).
- 30 On whom see Alcock (1989), 358f; Morris (1973), 95ff., who takes Arthur as a successor.
- 31 For the contentious matter of the authenticity of the Easter Annals on this matter, Alcock (1989), 83ff.; Dumville (1977a), 176.
- 32 As suggested by the reference in Caradoc of Llancarfen's *Vita Gildae* 5, in Chambers (1927), 262f.; Coe and Young (1995), 22.
- 33 Dumville (1977a), especially 188.
- 34 Cf. Morris (1973), 140f.; Alcock (1989), 360–363.
- 35 Higham (2002) handles this presentation very responsibly, but it always leaves an undistributed middle of at least possible 'fact' to be manipulated; and it is almost impossible in the last analysis to prove for any given figure.
- 36 See especially Alcock (1989), 347ff., on the special military characteristics of the site.
- 37 E.g. Littleton-Malcor (2000), 61.
- 38 The 'no smoke without fire' argument, against which Dumville (1997a), 187f.
- 39 For reservations against this old hypothesis of the Chadwicks, Green (2001), 4f.; Higham (2002), 144–150: a variety of materials could have been swept into the list.
- 40 Nennius' 56 (960 combatants killed in person by Arthur at Badon).
- 41 There is extensive doxography on the Twelve Sites: see now especially Malcor (2000) and Littleton-Malcor (2000), 327–331; for a sample of recent conjecture, Barber and Pykitt (1997), 185–212. But Alcock (1989) is wisely agnostic, as is Higham (2002), 144ff.
- 42 See *PLRE* 1.588 ('Magnus Maximus 39').
- 43 Nennius' 73; *Preiden Annwfn* (Spoils of Annwfn), in Coe and Young (1965), 135–139; *Triad* 26, in Bromwich (2nd edn, 1978), 45–54.
- 44 Materials collected in Briggs (1970), B1.163f; B2.243f.
- 45 See Appendix 3.

- 46 *Vita Merolini*, p.91 (Bryant 2001).
- 47 Geoffrey, *HRB* 8.9.
- 48 Cummins (1992), 161f.
- 49 E.g. Pope (1957) (in Matthews 1996, 332–346).
- 50 Darrah (1981); (1994).
- 51 Darrah (1994), 252ff. *passim*.
- 52 Darrah (1994), 93f.
- 53 Darrah (1994), 83–98 *passim* ('severed heads and sacred waters').
- 54 Note especially Padel (1994), 14: 'The overall picture is of the leader of a band of heroes who live outside society, whose main world is one of magical animals, giants, and other wonderful happenings, located in the wild parts of the landscape. The general impression is one of apartness.' Padel goes on to stress the pan-Celtic distribution of the material, which of course militates against the persistent attempts to localise the origins of the folkloric traditions. There is brief development of this view in Padel (2000), and in Green (2001), the latter with substantial bibliographical apparatus.
- 55 The principles of the Aarne-Thompson and Stith-Thompson indexes are usefully laid out in Thompson (1946), *passim*.
- 56 This is one of the less fortunate tendencies of the invaluable work of J.D. Bruce (2nd edn 1928), which in turn has stimulated a reaction of Celtic *Quellenkritik* by Loomis and his disciples.
- 57 The outline of the *Chevalier au Papegau*.
- 58 See especially Higham (2002), 98–217 *passim*.
- 59 Ammianus 15.9.4–8: Trojans occupy deserted regions of Gaul; Phocaeans founders of Massilia.
- 60 Nennius' 7 from Brutus a Roman consul; 10f. (as Britto); and 18 (with a different genealogy).
- 61 Loomis (1926), 292f.
- 62 *Historia* 3.20; see also Tatlock (1950), 30f.
- 63 See Appendix 1.
- 64 Lydus: Herodotus 1.7.

2 THE 'SARMATIAN CONNEXION' THEORY

- 1 (Ps.-) Alanus de Insulis, *Prophetia Anglicana* (Frankfurt, 1603), 22f., quoted in Loomis (1959), 62 (his translation).
- 2 For a summary of older attempts, Bruce (1928), 1.354–362.
- 3 Weston (1920).
- 4 Loomis (1959), 62.
- 5 C. Scott Littleton and A.C. Thomas (1978).
- 6 Second edition (2000), with important alterations and additional appendix by Malcor.
- 7 For the roots and development of the theory, Littleton-Malcor (2000), xxiii–xxix.
- 8 Following an idea of Malone (1925), 370ff.
- 9 Further materials in Wardrop (1894) and Dirr (1925); and now Colarusso (2002), which reached me too late for detailed consultation.
- 10 Herodotus 4.64ff.; Ammianus Marcellinus 31.2.19f.
- 11 Reid (2001), 28ff.

- 12 A point anticipated by Ashe (1985), 53–56.
- 13 Littleton-Malcor 181–193.
- 14 Littleton-Malcor 209–280.
- 15 Littleton-Malcor 68.
- 16 Mair (1983), 141 and 286 n.699, offers a parallel in an ancient Chinese tale, of a figure Wu Tzu-hsu who throws his sword into a river where it causes so much trouble that the river-god asks him to take it back; but this (as Mair presents it) seems to have more in common with Achilles' fight with the Scamander in Iliad 21. The Persian parallel noted by R.A. Nicholson in *Athenaeum*, 6 April 1901 was rightly rejected by Bruce (1928), 1.434f. note 197.
- 17 Higham (2002) seems uncharacteristically mistaken to dismiss this parallel at least as among 'superficial similarities', 76, just as are Littleton-Malcor (2000), 183, in dismissing the parallel between the kingship tests of Theseus and Arthur.
- 18 The tests do seem to have some prospect of reference to incidents either in Arthurian texts or in 'Bear's Son' related tales: I know of no exact parallel to the hero's being expected to serve as a bridge; but not facing the wheel might fit a version of the story of the Knight of the Parrot, where Arthur has to face a revolving blade at the entrance to a castle; being carried by a bird from one world to the other is standard in the 'Bear's Son' tale.
- 19 Dumézil (1930), 90, tale 16d.
- 20 Loomis (1963), 152.
- 21 I cannot say I am convinced by their assertion (79–124 *passim*) that Lancelot represents an apocope of Alanus-à-Lot, though medieval spelling and garbling of foreign proper names is routine. See now Chapter 6 below (with the cautions expressed).
- 22 On these see Rankin (1987), 188–207. Wadge (1987) notes the further possibility that Celts were recruited subsequently into the *cuneus Sarmatarum* itself, 211ff.
- 23 Reid (2001).
- 24 See below Appendix 2 at note 1.
- 25 Littleton-Malcor 187 and notes 37f. The story actually translated by Colarusso (2002) himself is slightly different: three brothers fail to lift the anvil of Tlepshw, but the Nart child-hero Sosryquo succeeds in moving it easily, and will be given a sword made from a scythe. The story is certainly ancient: compare Lucian, *Dialogi Deorum* 11.2, where the infant Hermes has the strength to steal the tongs of Hephaestus.
- 26 Littleton-Malcor (2000), 195.
- 27 Lucian, *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit* 29.
- 28 See Springer in *ALMA* (1959), 221–224.
- 29 Littleton-Malcor (2000), 218–225.
- 30 Herodotus 4.5; Littleton-Malcor (2000), 225.
- 31 For the problem, Le Gentil in *ALMA* 254; for a historical Alain le Grand, Littleton-Malcor 34.
- 32 Ancestors in Patch (1928).
- 33 Dumézil (1930), 105ff. tale 29. Cf. the description of the Nart customs in Colarusso (2002), 181: 'rolling a heavy and sharp iron wheel down the hill . . . and then rolling it up the hill using one hand covered with a chain-armour glove'.
- 34 Lines 3320–3455.

- 35 Nickel (1985), 1–7; one notes also a small collection of correspondences between Slavic and Turkish terms and Arthurian tradition, Lacy (1991), 397.
- 36 Colarusso (2002), 270–274.
- 37 Colarusso (2002), 366.
- 38 Colarusso (2002), 236–239.
- 39 Colarusso (2002), 181.
- 40 Colarusso (2002), 196–199. The table was known as an *Ayshwa*; and Colarusso notes in passing (199, note 3), that the Abaza version of this (in Circassian contexts small) table ‘seems to have been a larger, Arthurian round table, capable of accommodating Sosruqho as well as the rest of the Narts’.
- 41 Dumézil (1930), 116–118, tale 33.
- 42 Joyce (repr. 2000), 154.
- 43 For the larger question of these nationalities in the context of debates about ‘ethnicity’, see now Wells (2001).
- 44 For St. George as the Uastyrdzi of the Narts, e.g. Dumézil (1930), 76. For his role in general as an import to Britain, see now Riches (2000).
- 45 For this literature, *Dede Korkut* (1974), tr. G. Lewis, 9–22.
- 46 The chief objection of T. Green (2001), 16.
- 47 For the general background, Jones (1986), 6–23.
- 48 For his considerable use of authentic folktale, Anderson (2000), general index s.v.
- 49 Anderson (1976), 15–19.
- 50 Tr. M. Wardrop (1912).
- 51 Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 3.2.59–90; Lucian, *Toxaris* 1–7.
- 52 Reardon (1989), 826f.: the fragment is clearly romantic, contains the name Eubiotus, also found in Toxaris’ third tale, and mentions Sarmatians.
- 53 Herodotus 4.66.
- 54 Cf. Rankin (1987), 28.
- 55 For its literary characteristics, Kirk (1962), 56–59.
- 56 Wagner (1971), 220; cf. Rankin (1987), 28–33. For doubts as to the legitimacy of such categorisation, increasing in archaeological debate on ethnicity, Wells (2001).
- 57 Rankin (1987), 144 *passim*; 188–207.
- 58 Alcock (1971), 225. ‘This gate-tower has considerable interest . . . as the first Arthurian gate which can be reconstructed.’
- 59 Rankin (1987), 15, 100, 107, 111f.
- 60 Rankin (1987), 15; Pausanias 1.7.2.
- 61 Herodotus 1.14 (military action against Miletus and Smyrna; capture of the citadel at Colophon).
- 62 See above Chapter 1 at note 58.
- 63 For a different interpretation of ‘Trojan’ roots, Higham (2002), 124–128.
- 64 *Oration* 36; Anderson (2000), 157f.
- 65 Anderson (1993), 101.
- 66 On the battles see now Green (2001), 12, who widens the possibilities by suggesting a basis in mythological conflicts; and Appendix 6.
- 67 Malcor 1999, 2000.
- 68 Ashe (1985), 53–56; 96–100; and in Lacy (1991), s.v. *Riothamus*.
- 69 Malcor (1999), 8.
- 70 Littleton-Malcor 329, cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth (1966) tr. Thorpe, 218.

- 71 Plutarch *de defectu oraculorum* 420A (an island in which Cronus is confined, guarded by Briareus, and surrounded by many *daemones* as retinue and servants).
- 72 *PIR2* no. 184; Malcor (1999), 7; for Arthur in Italy, Chambers (1927), 221 (among much).
- 73 Dio Cassius 73.8ff. (incursion and revolt in Britain; march of 1500 to Italy under an unspecified commander; Perennis, the praetorian prefect, executed for complicity).
- 74 For the date, Winkler and Stephens (1995), 182.
- 75 For discussion, Anderson (1994), 153f.

3 A FIRST ARKTOUROS: KING ARKAS OF ARCADIA

- 1 In Lacy (1991), 19.
- 2 Dumville (1977b), 30 offers a date of around 1200 for the glossator's hand. The other etymology, 'iron hammer, by which lion's teeth are smashed', does not readily relate to any Arthurian material known either to Dumville or to this author.
- 3 I have yet to come across any academic possessor of this information who is aware of its implications. Barber (1972), 50 dismisses an old suggestion of the Andersons that the allusion in Gildas 32.1 to a 'warden of the bear's stronghold' is a reference to Arcturus; *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, ed. Bromwich (1978), 544f. relates the term Arcturus merely to the North, and so points in the wrong geographical direction; Michell (1990) is concerned only with an astro-archaeological interpretation of Glastonbury. Others taking their information from *OED* or *MED* do not go far enough: Griffen (1994) is aware of the advantage of such a title to a Dark Age Arthur but, because he assumes a Dark Age Arthur in the first place, remains unaware of the Greek tradition that underlies the astronomical name. The discrediting of any traces of the 'solar mythology' school of mythological explanation has I suspect contributed to this major lacuna in modern Arthurian scholarship: Rhys (1891) did not happen to mention Arcturus, and there is no awareness in either Ranke (1977–) or in Lacy (1991).
- 4 Hesiod, *Erga* 566, 610, with West's notes (and that to 568).
- 5 Arthurian scholars have tended to treat the medial *c* as merely a hypercorrection, as it would be in *arctus* for *artus*, *arcte* for *arte*. Such a phenomenon is of course known in Medieval and indeed in classical texts; the congruence of ancient material on Arcturus with King Arthur disproves that it is happening here. Note that the simple word *arctus* (also attested as *arctos*) 'bear', is a perfectly normal classical Latin word in its own right, corresponding precisely to Greek *arktos*, with the same meaning.
- 6 E.g. no fewer than four of the twenty-nine texts printed in the appendix to Chambers (1927) where the name is actually mentioned.
- 7 Latham s.v. Arcturus; *OED* and *MED* supply still further examples.
- 8 Hence it is irrelevant that a change of vowel phonology from Artorius to Arthur would be perfect in late Latin (cf. Higham 2002, 74). The trouble is that the reduction of Arturus from Arcturus is just as satisfactory in any period of the language. Ashe in Lacy (1991) s.v. Arthur formulates his challenge in the wrong terms: the onus is not on advocates of a divine Arthur to produce a divine Artorius, when they have (but have not recognised) a divine Arcturus to begin with. I am inclined to suspect that Artorius is an early Latin vocalic variant of Arturius, an

- adjectival formation from Ar(c)turus, used to denote human names based on those of a god, on the analogy of Dionysus > Dionysius. The letters *o* and *u* are freely interchanged in early Latin inscriptions in particular (*consul/consol*; *populum/populum* etc.).
- 9 So Bromwich (1978) and Griffen (1994) (note 3 above). Goodrich (1986), 25 extends the astronomical associations, but without documentation, argument, or outcome.
 - 10 Standard treatments in *RE* 2.1 (1895) s.v.; Roscher s.v.; Gantz (1993), 726–729; and *LIMC* s.v. But the scholar will look very hard for a complete inventory of the ancient testimonia on Arkas, particularly on complete details of attributed family.
 - 11 For brief commentary on the star-lore in the latter pair, see now Condos (1997).
 - 12 Virgil, *Georgics* 1.67.
 - 13 For the detailed testimonia on this core part of the story, see still the synoptic edition of the Eratosthenes fragments in Robert (1878), 50–53 (Hesiod fr. 163M-W; Schol. Aratus and Germanicus BP and G, Hyginus *de Astronomia* 2.1).
 - 14 Hyginus, *Fabula* 130.
 - 15 The connexion between Arkas and Arktouros is made in Eratosthenes *Katasterismoi* 1 (conveniently consulted in Hesiod fr. 163MW8; and Maass (1888), 181; cf. the Aratus Scholia pp. 344 and 197f.; see also Hyginus *de Astronomia* 2.1,4; Ovid *Met.* 2.496ff.; *Fasti* 2.181ff.
 - 16 Petellidas of Knidos, *FGrH* 464 = Hyginus, *de Astronomia* 2.4.
 - 17 The only reference I have seen to Arkas in traditional Arthurian secondary literature is unfortunately destined to mislead: Tatlock (1950), 112 note 127, cites Servius on Aeneid 8.130: *Mercurius, ex quo Arcades*, to show that the origin of the Arcadians is Mercury, and he then quotes Martial (9.34.6) presenting Mercury as Arkas. But there is a fundamental misunderstanding here. Arkas is merely the adjectival use, reminding us that Mercury himself is Arcadian. He is not *identical* with Arkas.
 - 18 Pausanias 8.4.1–5. Pausanias is the key source for much of what follows. On his reliability, Habicht (1985), 67f. on the Arcadians of Stymphalos; Arafat (1996), 43–79. The commentary by Frazer (1898) is still invaluable, as are the extensive notes in Levi (1971), despite some inaccuracies in the translation.
 - 19 A problem remains, however, on the identity of ‘Adristas’. The name as it stands is unknown, and the context clearly demands a further culture-hero similar and complementary in function to Triptolemus himself. The most obvious figure in a classical context would be Aristaeus, he of *bougonia* fame in Virgil’s fourth *Georgic*, and that emendation has been proposed (Sylburg). But no tradition we know makes Aristaeus a clothworker. An intriguing but circular possibility is Spiro’s emendation παρά Δρίστα for παρ’ Ἀδρίστα, a great deal less complicated to account for: although the proposer could not have known this, the candidate in question would be the thoroughly Arthurian Drystan/Tristan, again not known for his activities with cloth-working, but part of the Arthurian scene, and able to turn his hand in the Welsh triads to pig-farming (Triad 26). Levi wants to derive the name from a verb ἀτρίζομαι which he explains in connection with wool-winding; the word exists, but nothing like such a meaning is offered up to the 1996 Supplement to *LSJ*.
 - 20 Pausanias 8.36.8.
 - 21 For this image, Borgeaud (1988), 5–22.

- 22 *The Mabinogion* (1993) tr. Jones and Jones, 95f.
- 23 Below at note 43.
- 24 Chambers (1927), 209.
- 25 For a good characterisation of the Arcadia of myth, Borgeaud (1988), 47–63.
- 26 Hesiod Fr. 163 Merkelbach-West. For detailed discussion of the Hesiodic tradition, Sale (1962).
- 27 Layamon 22736ff.; brief mention in Brut 9994ff. Cf. the discussion in Bruce (1928) 1.826–827. Note the double tradition of the foundation of the table: in the *Prose Merlin* it goes back to Uther, and Arthur inherits it from the father of Guinevere. The Ancient tradition is also double. Pausanias credits the foundation of Trapezous to Arkas' uncle Trapezus (8.3.3), among many similarly desperate derivations. But the two traditions may be compatible if, as Hyginus states, Arkas *communivit* ('fortified', 'consolidated') the site. See further *RE* 6.A2 s.v. Trapezus.
- 28 'Nennius', *Historia* 73.
- 29 Pausanias seems to know this only because of a specific accident in the first games (5.1.8).
- 30 Maass (1958), 355.
- 31 The Homeric scholiasts give a good deal of detail on the single occurrence of this word in Homer (*Iliad* 23.845). It seems to have been a rod which could be thrown to separate cattle, then retrieved by a rope attachment. Held in reverse, it could serve presumably as an ox-driver's whip. It suggests the image of Arthur in the early Welsh sources, as presiding over a rough-and-ready rustic society.
- 32 It is possible to guess at a form *kalav/bur, where a weak semi-consonant v or b separated the later diphthongised vowels; in that case there might have been not one but two digammas, the first consonantal, the second vocalic. But the attested kalabr- might itself have produced a weak vocalic epenthesis between b and r.
- 33 At any rate in the organisation current in Hellenistic poetry; earlier tradition is much less specific and labour-intensive, often with only three Muses.
- 34 *Triad* 12.
- 35 Pomponius Mela, *De chorographia* 3.5.
- 36 Pausanias 8.37.11.
- 37 Coe and Young (1995), 110–115.
- 38 Lines 24693–25134 (Thomas (1989), 278–282).
- 39 *FGrH* 457.F9.
- 40 Testimonia in Gantz (1993), 110, including Aeschylus fr. 256R, where he is mentioned together with a second Pan son of Zeus.
- 41 Robert de Boron, *Merlin* Bryant (2001), 51.
- 42 Robert de Boron, *Merlin* Bryant (2001), 67–73.
- 43 Grisandole in *Prose Merlin* (ed. H. Wheatley *EETS* 1865–1899).
- 44 Eumelus fr. 8B Fowler (2000). Note that such an action may also have some relevance to Arthur's connection with the great Tree Battle in the *Kat Godeu* poem in the *Book of Taliessin*, sometimes identified with the battle in the forest of Calydon. Cf. P. Sims-Williams (1991), 51f.
- 45 As in the anecdote on the Egyptian girl at Dodona told by Herodotus, 2.57.
- 46 One notes the figure of Agunda, golden-winged and capable of a wheel of fortune and prophetic role among the Narts, in Dumézil's Tale 29. Other children of Arkas emerge haphazardly: a daughter of Arkas Diomeneia (Pausanias 8.9.9); a son Triphylus from Laodamia, daughter of the Laconian Amyclas (= Pherekydes'

- Leanira) (Polybius 4.77); Erasm from Amilo, daughter of Gongylos, no apparent reference in *RE* s.v.; Maenalus (Hellanicus fr. 60) and Dryops (Aristotle fr. 482 = Strabo 8.373).
- 47 So Green (2001), 12; cf. Sims-Williams (1991), 51f.
- 48 An additional version (Jacoby *FGrH* 262, F12 commentary (Schol. Theocr. 3.13c)) assigns Rhoicus to Cnidus, but the tree itself to Nineveh; the second half is incomplete, however, and stops with the mere mention of the bee.
- 49 Jacoby *FGrH* 262, F12.
- 50 Pausanias 10.34.2.
- 51 Pausanias 2.26.4.
- 52 Pausanias 8.29.1.
- 53 Frazer long ago engagingly connected the cults here with the thunder-worship of the Circassians (and Pausanias 8.29.1). The world of the Narts is not so far removed from our key Arcadian site.
- 54 See below Chapter 5 after note 16.
- 55 *Preideu Annwfn*, Coe and Young (1995), 15–22.
- 56 For variants of the myth, Apollodorus 3.14.7; Diodorus 4.82; Nonnus 47.34–255.
- 57 Nennius', *Historia* 73.
- 58 *MED* s.v. *mere* (maire).
- 59 In Nennius', *Historia* 56.
- 60 In Medieval and Renaissance star-maps the Virgin lies directly *behind* Bootes, who has his back to the recumbent figure, which he could then take up: e.g. Villa Farnese Fresco, Caprarola, anonymous 1575, Whitfield (1995), 3; cf. Backer's Star Chart, 1710, Frontispiece *ibid*.
- 61 Maass (1888), 201.
- 62 In the Pausanias passage above, 8.4.1.
- 63 See above Chapter 2 at note 34.
- 64 *FGrH* 464.F 1.
- 65 Cf. Pausanias 8.4.1.
- 66 See Geoffrey *HRB* 11.2; *Vita Merlini* 908–940.
- 67 Robert de Boron, Bryant (2001), 108.
- 68 For other versions, Gantz (1993), 726ff.
- 69 Pausanias 8.37.6f.
- 70 E.g. *Gawain and Gorlagros* init.; cf. the *First Continuation* of Chrétien's *Perceval* (Roach, iii.452–456).
- 71 As in both cases in the previous note.

4 ARKTOUROS II: THE EVIDENCE FROM FOLKTALE

- 1 In particular as regards the sources of the Dutch *Walewein* romance in the tale-type 'The Search for the Golden Bird': for sceptical discussion, *ALMA* 457ff. (H. Sparnaay). But the tale-type is clearly established in this instance. It does not matter how unlike the details of individual episodes are, when the distinctive structure (tasks that can be accomplished only by means of further tasks) and most defining feature are present (the helpful fox).
- 2 Second edition (1955–1958).
- 3 Second edition (1961). Useful supplementary material in Ashliman (1987).
- 4 In Lacy (1997), 33.

- 5 Higham (2002), 96: 'it seems just possible, but far from proven, that an indigenous bear-cult might have influenced the folklore.'
- 6 For discrepant tradition, Gantz (1993), 725ff.
- 7 There is no fully satisfactory study along the lines of historic-geographic method. But Panzer (1901) collected and reported over 200 examples, and competently indicates the degree of variation under seven divisions of the tale. For summary, Aarne and Thompson (1961), 301 (cf. Bolte-Polivka (1913–1932), 2.300; Thompson (1946), 33). Delarue (1957) gives a useful regional report on no fewer than 108 French examples alone. Rhys Carpenter's application to the Odyssey, though in fact right-headed as far as it goes, is not presented helpfully (1946), 136–156. Stitt (1992) reconsiders and enhances the materials which Panzer had used to study the tale in relation to Beowulf: detailed template 209–217. There is a useful recent survey in *EM* 10 s.v. Prinzessinnen; further Aarne-Thompson type-references in *EM* 1 s.v. Artus.
- 8 E.g. Thompson (1946), 33.
- 9 There is a good partial example of the complex at Colarusso (2002), 12–15; the opposition of the one or usually two other brothers is missing, as is the bear's rearing of the brothers, as often when as here the 'fruit missing from the orchard' motif is included. Unfortunately Colarusso does not adopt the Aarne-Thompson system to identify his tales.
- 10 Unusually, of Artemis herself, a detail gloated on by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.418–440, cf. Hesiod fr. 163M.-W.; Apollodorus 3.8.2 gives the alternative of seduction in the guise of Apollo. See also Gantz (1993), 725ff.
- 11 For the diversity, Gantz (1993), 725ff.
- 12 The new 10th volume of *EM* treats Type 301 under the title 'Die drei geraubten Prinzessinnen' 1363–1369 (W. Puchner). Note also most recently Bagheri (2001), with a crucial reminder of the tale's antiquity.
- 13 Bagheri (2001), 199–201.
- 14 E.g. Grimm 91, 166. In essence the 'Strong John' versions dispense with the brothers and the rescue of the princess; and the evil master resembles the rich unjust brother of the Philomelus story.
- 15 Conon 35, *FGrH* 26.F1, on which see now Hansen (2002), 352ff.
- 16 *Peace* 92–179; 221–526; 1052–1073 (Hierocles, an oracle-monger; altercations with arms manufacturers follow). The giving of part of his body is recycled as an obscene joke: his excrement will feed the giant dung-beetle who flies him up to heaven.
- 17 Panzer (1901), 226–245; Bagheri (2001).
- 18 The bear is also involved in a heroic sleep tale, where the sleeping Arthur would be comparable to the Thracian Zalmoxis.
- 19 But see Appendix 2 at notes 8f.
- 20 Plutarch, *Tbesus* 31 (rationalised).
- 21 See now Jost (1985), *passim*; Borgeaud (1988), 140–146.
- 22 Where however the Arthur in question is in fact a younger relative of the king himself.
- 23 Panzer (1901), 153ff.
- 24 Tsarevitch Ivan, the Glowing Bird and the Grey Wolf (1912), 93–118, in Wheeler (1995).
- 25 Pausanias 8.2.6.

- 26 Schwartz (1983), 106–112 ('The Golden Tree').
- 27 In the respective outlines offered by the *Life of Gildas* and Chrétien's *Lancelot*.
- 28 Cf. Calvino (1982), 145; El-Shamy (1980), 2; Grimm 121.
- 29 For example, in the peculiar details of the supernatural conception, resembling Danaë's shower of gold, Degh (1965), 109f.
- 30 Somadeva, *Katha Sarit Sagara* 8 (Tawney-Penzer (1925), vol. 3, pp.218–235).
- 31 So Sattar (1994), xxvi.
- 32 E.g. *Diu Krône* lines 10113–11036, pp.113–123 Thomas; *Prose Lancelot*, Lacy (2000), 143–162 *passim*.
- 33 *Katha Sarit Sagara*, as in note 30.
- 34 Above Chapter 3 at note 39.
- 35 Comparison with Airem in Chambers (1927), 207f. For Theseus, below Chapter 9.
- 36 Ed. Kittredge, in Brown and Kittredge (1903); tr. Nutt, *Folklore* 15 (1904), 40–67.
- 37 So already Hesiod fr. 163 M.-W. Pausanias' testimony (8.2.6) is non-committal, but could be taken to allow that even Lykaon could revert to human form after an interval.
- 38 In an anecdote long recognised as ultimately oriental: Loomis in *ALMA* 478.
- 39 Cf. Padel (2000), 29.
- 40 Text of W. Foerster (repr. Manchester 1967), 380–407; tr. D.D.R. Owen (1987).
- 41 Pausanias 8.38.4.
- 42 *HRB* 10.2.
- 43 *HRB* 8.14.
- 44 As to the actual configuration of stars, the two bright stars separated by a dragon seem to point to Ursa Major and Ursa Minor with Draco in between – authentic 'bear astronomy' at least loosely appropriate to the etymology of Arcturus.
- 45 E.g. Pausanias 7.18.2f.; Gantz (1993), 69f.
- 46 Standard description of their primitive lifestyle in Pausanias 8.1.5f., characterised by the diet of acorns.
- 47 So Jost (1985); Borgeaud (1988), 143–146; Pausanias 8 *passim*, especially 8.42 on Black Demeter.
- 48 Pausanias 8.29.1.
- 49 Testimonia for the latter in Chambers (1927), 222–228.
- 50 Pausanias 8.36.8, who also notes (8.35.8) the tomb of Callisto.
- 51 *Triad* 20 ('Three Red Reapers of the Island of Britain').
- 52 *Triad* 26.
- 53 *Culhwch*, Jones and Jones (1949), 95.
- 54 Below Appendix 2: Plutarch, *Theseus* 3.4f., 6.2f.
- 55 Apollodorus 3.8.2 (Maia alone); for Hermes with the child, e.g. Getty Museum, Malibu 72AE.128.
- 56 So *POxy* 4306 (1995), col. 1 lines 8f.
- 57 E.g. in the *Livre d'Artus*, White (1997), 298ff.
- 58 Tr. Zipes (1992), 540.
- 59 Gillies (1981), 47, 60ff.
- 60 *Metamorphoses* 1.199–243; cf. Apollodorus 1.7.2.
- 61 E.g. (Dundes (1988), 225, South America, Huaca Ynyan province of Peru): two brothers fed during flood by two birds with women's faces; one of the brothers makes the younger bird his wife; they live on seed, then plant seeds and live on

the crop (Dundes (1988), 251f., Cameroon): girl feeds he-goat; in return for kindness he tells her there will be a flood, and she and her brother must flee. As sole survivors in the area the goat advises them that they should marry (Dundes (1988), 274ff., Northern Kammu): bamboo rat warns boy of flood, boy takes sister, pig and dog in drum and rides out flood. Finds trees fallen. Captures pigeon which regurgitates seed he can plant. The pig works in the field rooting up grass; the lazy dog destroys the evidence and accuses the pig to the boy. He hunts the pig. The people sit on a treetrunk till it breaks. Their cries are the first language (Dundes (1988), Mesoamerican flood tales): typically man warned to share hollow treetrunk with woman (184); they survive flood. Man accidentally discovers cannibalism, flood as punishment (196).

62 Dundes (1988), 312.

63 Bagheri (2001), 199 (though here the hero is restoring waters withheld by the monster).

5 ARDUS, 'GREATEST OF KNIGHTS': A FIRST ARTUS-FIGURE

1 Arthur without termination in Nennius', *Historia* 56.

2 Tatlock (1950), 220–223.

3 Tatlock (1950), 220f.

4 Testimonia in *FGrH* 90, with Jacoby's commentary *ad loc.*

5 *FGrH* 765.F4.

6 *FGrH* 765.F12f.

7 *FGrH* 765.

8 Herodotus 1.7.

9 Nicolaus *FGrH* 90F.44.

10 White (1997), 174.

11 E.g. *Vita Cadoci* 18 and prologue (White (1997), 13–16); *Vita Paterni* (White (1997), 18).

12 *AND* s.v. Seres 2 (which does not cite the alternative spelling).

13 Nicolaus *FGrH* 90F.45. For the name Meles, cf. Melwas, Loomis *ALMA* 178. The *Estoire* (Bryant (1978), 207) links Melias of the Waste Manor as a friend of Kay.

14 White (1997), 185.

15 Bryant (1978), 21.

16 Curtis (1994), 194ff.

17 Texts in White (1997), 14–20 (*Vita Cadoci*, *Vita Paterni*).

18 Malory 4.6–15.

19 *Estoire* (Bryant 1978), 29f.

20 See Appendix 3.

21 Most notably in the Prose *Mort Artu*.

22 If we look the other way, as we shall with Tristan, to Persian hero-myth, we find a Karsasp or Keresasp who is treated as a heroic figure of the same stature as Thraetaona himself, but with a rather more chequered career, and himself the hero of a Persian heroic epic; the presence of an Athwyas in the same epic corpus should not go unnoticed either.

23 *AND* s.v. Seres (Vulgate Lancelot).

24 As in the Welsh Triads, 26W (Coe and Young 1995, 79).

- 25 See Jacoby's commentary at Nicolaus 90.F44.
- 26 See Appendix 1.
- 27 *AND* s.v. Camalis.
- 28 We are also aware (*RE* s.v. Lydos 5) of a Lydus as a Scythian King and alleged introducer of bronze-smelting to Scythia, Pliny *NH* 7.197.

6 SOME ANCIENT GAWAIN-FIGURES, AND AN ELUSIVE LANCELOT

- 1 For the historical Gyges in general, Hanfmann (1983), cc. 4f.; M. Mellink *CAH* (2nd edn) 3.2, 643ff.
- 2 Herodotus 1.14.
- 3 For Lydian society and culture before the Persian period, Hanfmann (1983), 67–99.
- 4 Hanfmann (1983), 56.
- 5 *JHS* 114 (1994), 159f.
- 6 Fr. 7 Degani.
- 7 R. Wallace, *JHS* 108 (1988), 203–207 takes the latter as the Lydian word for 'lion'.
- 8 *Respublica* 359C–360B.
- 9 I accept the general opinion that Plato's text is more than likely to be faulty here, claiming as it appears to do that this happened to an *ancestor* of the famous Gyges. If we excise the name Gyges as a gloss, 'the Lydian' will refer to the last of the Mermnads, Gyges' descendant Croesus, and so his ancestor will be Gyges himself. See also Adam's (1902) Appendix on the passage.
- 10 1.8–14.
- 11 Jacoby, *FGrH* 90F47.
- 12 *Greek Questions* 45.
- 13 *AJPb* 23 (1902), 261–282; 362–387. In particular Smith notes the problems of reconciling a story featuring a magic ring of invisibility with a 'straight' version in which no such means is employed. Two texts from Ptolemy Chennos and Philostratus (*Life of Apollonius* 3.7) are adduced to show that Candaules' queen had a double-pupil and a *dracontitis*, a stone from a dragon's head associated with Gyges. From all this Smith conjectured that what really happened at Candaules' bedroom door was that Gyges used the ring to make himself invisible, and that the queen had a counter-charm so that she was able to see him after all. This is certainly tempting and plausible. But it raises problems as well: why does Gyges feign reticence when with the aid of the magic ring he can see the queen naked any time if he wants to? But the matter of the ring adds an important detail. If the ring is associated with a stone in a dragon's head, that means that the Pendragon ('Dragonhead') motif is associated with the Eastern Arduus-tales as well as the Arthurian material in the West.
- 14 Aarne and Thompson (1961), *ad loc.*
- 15 J.F.Campbell (1861), no.2. Cf. Macdonald and Bruford (1994), 80–96 (cf. Briggs (1970), 1.290–294.
- 16 E.g. the version of 'Jack the Giant-killer' in Opie and Opie (1974), 70ff. (in the Granada Paperback pagination), itself set at King Arthur's Court, where the hero Jack helps King Arthur's son. See Appendix 3.
- 17 For a collection of Green Knights texts, E. Brewer (1992).
- 18 Herodotus 1.7; *LSJ* s.v. μέρμνος.

- 19 E.g. Coghlan (1990) s.v. Gawain.
- 20 Herodotus 1.7.
- 21 Heinrich von dem Türlin, tr. J.W. Thomas (1989), 170f. (lines 14,927–15,004).
- 22 Thomas (1989), 280 (lines 24,907–24,936).
- 23 Thomas (1989), 295f. (lines 26,240–26,366).
- 24 Thomas (1989), 227–237 (lines 20,114–21,094); the adventure is routinely associated with Gawain in Graal adventures.
- 25 Brewer (1992), 175f.
- 26 *Sir Gawaine and the Grene Knight*, ed. Tolkien and Gordon (2nd edn rev. N. Davis, 1968).
- 27 Tr. Brewer (1992), 175f.
- 28 Brewer (1992), 176.
- 29 Brewer (1992), 115ff.
- 30 Ed. M.L. Day (1988).
- 31 *FGrH* 90F47.7.
- 32 There is a further variant that might be felt to fit, with an epicentre transferred from Lydia to mainland Greece, but in a far earlier era. Pelops has a rival Myrtilus for the hand of Hippodameia; he helps Pelops to woo the princess in a fatal race by disabling his enemy Oenomaus' chariot, having been promised the *ius primae noctis* by Pelops; but he is thrown out of the chariot. Once more the amorous quarrel in a chariot; once more the successful usurper (with again control of a mysterious magic horse-frightening object). And once more a connection in the first instance with Lydia, and with the founding of a royal house, this time that of Atreus on the Greek mainland, again with overtones of fabulous wealth and power (for the variants of the Pelops legend, Gantz (1993), 540–545).
- 33 *ALMA* 501–505.
- 34 *FGrH* 765.F4b.
- 35 *FGrH* 90.F47.5–13.
- 36 Wolfram von Eschenbach, tr. A.T. Hatto (1980), 272–275.
- 37 *Vita Cadoci* 18, conveniently translated in White (1997), 14ff.
- 38 So Ephorus *FGrH* 70.F115; Theopompus 115F.393; Nicolaus 90.F30; Apollodorus 2.8.2–5; Pausanias 2.19.1f.
- 39 Pausanias 8.22.2.
- 40 Herodotus 8.137f.
- 41 Gaevani in the *Farvardin Yasht* 115 (*Avesta* vol. 2, *SBE* 23 (1884), 213; Vevan in the *Dadistani-Dinik* (AD 881), 36.2 (*Pahlavi Texts* 2, *SBE* 18 (1880), 165); cf. Giw, like Vevan paired with Tus, in the *Shab-Nama*.
- 42 Below Chapter 8 at note 12.
- 43 So Coyajee (1939), 14, reported by Littleton-Malcors (2000), 135. I have been unable to see this text; its force for connexion of Gevan and the Graal would be no surprise, given the incident preserved at Herodotus 8.137f., discussed in Chapter 7.
- 44 *The Anturs of Arther*, ed. M. Mills (London, 1992), 80f.
- 45 *Shab-Nama*, Levy (1967), 83ff.
- 46 See Jackson in Loomis (1959), 15ff.
- 47 Littleton-Malcors (2000), 79–124.
- 48 Bruce (1928), I.200f.
- 49 Nicolaus *FGrH* 90.F45.

- 50 Nicolaus Fr.16.
- 51 One notes the agricultural detail here: this is complementary to the agricultural overtones of Arkas himself, Pausanias 8.4.1ff.
- 52 An oddly similar tradition to the last sentence resurfaces in Geoffrey of Monmouth (1.5), where it is Brutus of Troy who defeats and drowns the Greeks in the River Akalon, which Tatlock (1950/1, 112) connects with Syrian Askalon, among many other possibilities.
- 53 E.g. Malory 18.20.
- 54 Paton (1926), I.169, 171; as noted by Littleton-Malcor 154.
- 55 See now van Berg (1972), I, which collects 127 testimonia.
- 56 *Testimonia*, van Berg (1972), 67–70.
- 57 *FGrH* 90.F44.
- 58 Hill (1977), 48.
- 59 Celtic explanations of Llawwynnyawc as ‘windy-arm’ (Jackson) or ‘of the striking hand’ (Foster) might point us in the direction of Greek *ankalis/-idos* for a bent arm or embrace; but one has the instinct of clutching at straws. One notes again that Askalos’ brother is the ambiguous Tantalus, imprisoned underground (usually) by the gods; was the name that of the Giant offender against the gods Encelados, imprisoned like the Arthur of Gervase of Tilbury under Etna? Again, we simply have too little information on the whole stratum of early mythological generations.
- 60 See Chapter 7 after note 52.
- 61 I.79f.; II.922f.; III.927ff; IV.1502f.
- 62 Hesiod, *Aspis* 181.
- 63 Ovid, *Met.* 8.316, 350.
- 64 Apollonius I.1082–1150.
- 65 Apollonius I.1140–1149.
- 66 Apollonius I.1134ff.
- 67 Lacy (2000), 245ff.
- 68 Fr. 279M-W.
- 69 Fr. 200 Pfeiffer, with the papyrus *diegesis*.
- 70 Malory 2.18; Hesiod fr. 279M-W.
- 71 Especially in the *Prose Lancelot*, Lacy (2000), 94–102.
- 72 Lacy (2000), 260–266.
- 73 See C. Bruce (1999), s.v.
- 74 In the *Prose Lancelot*, Lacy (1993–1996), 238–241.

7 HOLY GRAALS AND CIRCULAR OBJECTS

- 1 For discussion of Celtic predecessors, Loomis (1963), 20–27. For general discussion of theories of Graal origins, see now Goetinck in Mahoney (2000), 117–147.
- 2 Colarusso’s Nart Saga 2 (2002, 12–15) offers a revealing combination of ‘Arthurian’, ‘Bear’s Son’ and Graal characteristics usefully combined: one of two sons wounds a dove who steals the golden apple from the Narts’ orchard. Pursuing her to the sea, he finds and cures her of her wound on the ocean floor, having first been served by her sisters on a table containing one of the golden apples of fertility, after being offered by her two sisters a ewer and white towel. He is able to cure her with the phial of her own blood he gathered at the time of the wounding (the equivalent of healing the otherwise incurable wound).

- 3 For the problem in Wolfram, Springer, *ALMA* 233f. (inconclusive).
- 4 Cf. Darrah (1994), 31; Malory 17.22.
- 5 Pausanias 8.4.1.
- 6 Herodotus 8.137f.
- 7 *Triad* 26.
- 8 The integrity of this text has been doubted, notably by Loomis (1970), 86–90, and Souvestre has been accused of inventing it. But the Herodotus tale is a timely warning that Graal-type material does appear in this or some very similar form.
- 9 Main account in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.85–145; discussion in Roller (1983), 310ff.
- 10 Loomis (1970) tried after some hesitation to discredit Souvestre's version of this story as an Ossianic-style forgery, precisely on the grounds of its resemblance to a nineteenth-century paraphrase of Chrétien; but the details of the resemblance to Herodotus do not come from this source, and one suspects that Souvestre's methods were no worse than those of the Grimms at a comparable period in dealing with the material of oral tales.
- 11 E.g. in the *Queste*, p. 275, Matarasso (though here the bread is entered by the figure of a child descending from heaven and takes on human form: this might be no more than a description of transubstantiation).
- 12 Aarne-Thompson 759B; a good example in Glassie (1985), 70.
- 13 Perlesvaus tr. Loomis (1963), 124.
- 14 Tr. Loomis (1963), 173; Bryant 164.
- 15 *Estoire*, Bryant (1978), 81.
- 16 *Queste*, Loomis (1963), 173.
- 17 In the Welsh *Mabinogion*, *Peredur* tr. G. and T. Jones (rev. London 1993), 162; 179.
- 18 Claudian *carmina minora* 8 (with a much stronger hint of incest between mother and son).
- 19 E.g. Loomis (1963), 82–96, discussing Manessier's continuation of Chrétien's Graal Romance and the Welsh *Peredur*, in both of which the hero is Percival.
- 20 Loomis (1963), 91.
- 21 Most obviously in Chrétien's *Lancelot* and its analogue in the *Life of Gildas*.
- 22 *Queste*, Matarasso (1971), 67.
- 23 But we should also note that Maelwas' kingdom is located in the region of the city of glass (i.e. Glastonbury), according to Caradoc's *Life of St. Gildas*. Meles' exile to Babylon would also fulfil this condition, given the pre-eminence of Sumero-Babylonian glass-making.
- 24 For the inscriptions and their background, Cogan and Tadmor (1977), 65–85.
- 25 Diodorus 2.23.1.
- 26 E.g. Loomis (1963), 200f. (Wolfram von Eschenbach's description of the Fisher King in *Parzival*).
- 27 Texts from Cogan and Tadmor (1977), 73.
- 28 Cogan and Tadmor (1977), 68.
- 29 Cogan and Tadmor (1977), 73.
- 30 Cogan and Tadmor (1977), 75f., 79f.
- 31 For the image of Sardanapalus, above n.24.
- 32 Wolfram e.g. pp. 61 Hatto: Gahmuret dies fighting the Babylonians. We should also test the *Shah-Nama* not only for a Gawain figure but for a Parzifal: the name we must scrutinise is that of Garsifaz; he is contemporary with Giw (= Gevan),

- but is on the Turanian side; this might well be the equivalent of having Parsifal once more as one of the barbarian outsiders.
- 33 Herodotus 1.14.
 - 34 Coe and Young (1995), 100f.
 - 35 See p. 73 above.
 - 36 See Appendix 2.
 - 37 Gantz (1993), 367, from *PEG* fr. 7 (rejuvenates Aeson by boiling *pharmaka* in a golden *lebes*).
 - 38 See Loomis (1963), 109–112 and 156–158.
 - 39 Loomis (1963), 147.
 - 40 For the details, Gantz (1993), 172.
 - 41 Loomis (1963), 109, cf. Loomis (1949), 142f.
 - 42 For the incident, Gantz (1993), 171f.
 - 43 So Pherecydes *FGrH* 3.F33; Apollodorus 1.9.11f.
 - 44 Gantz (1993), 576.
 - 45 For the fairly fluid tradition, Gantz (1993), 589f.
 - 46 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.247ff.: inventing the pair of compasses.
 - 47 Diodorus 4.74.4–7.
 - 48 E.g. Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* 4.1638–1688, cf. Simonides 568 *PMG*, Apollodorus 1.9.26.
 - 49 For the tradition, Gantz (1993), 531.
 - 50 *Life of Apollonius* 3.25.
 - 51 Gantz (1993), 533f. (the details are still puzzling).
 - 52 Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.250f.
 - 53 Philostratus (1912), 3.25.
 - 54 Philostratus (1912), 3.32.
 - 55 Loomis (1963), 191.
 - 56 Alliterative *Mort* 3362ff., White (1997), 119f. At this point we may wish to add another Graal analogue that has completely evaded notice. This is the episode in the *Odyssey* where the young Telemachus encounters Nestor. He meets the old king at a sacrifice/banquet on the shore first of all; he is supported and advised by Athene as the Graal-maiden, who takes the cup and passes it to Telemachus (though she is disguised at the time); Telemachus has to overcome considerable youthful hesitation, and he is also in quest of news of his (supposedly murdered) father, again with a view to vengeance. A second banquet takes place inside Nestor's palace. A further doublet occurs in the company of Helen and Menelaus in the following book, where Helen herself mixes soothing drugs and there is a 'tale of the other world' on the part of Menelaus regarding his meeting with the supernatural sea-figure Proteus, followed by prophecy of his place in the Isles of the Blessed in the West. What is interesting about these episodes is their attachment to a figure whose father appears in the Nart Sagas as Uryssmaeg: if the latter has Arthurian connexions, then his Greek analogue is likely to have as well (*Odyssey* 3.1 – 4.623).
 - 57 Gantz (1993), 576.
 - 58 Loomis (1963), 191.
 - 59 Gantz (1993), 534.
 - 60 Loomis (1963), 48, from the story of Conn in the *Phantom's Frenzy* (i.e. supernatural prophecy).

- 61 Pausanias 8.3.2; 8.5.7f.; 8.39–41.
- 62 Pausanias 8.39.1, 41.7.
- 63 Pausanias 8.7.1–3.

8 TRISTAN AND THRAETAONA: THE TRISTAN LEGEND IN THE EAST

- 1 On the relationship between the versions and the growth of the tradition, see various authors in *ALMA* (1959): Newstead 122–133; Whitehead 134–144; Jackson 145–156; Vinaver 339–347. For massive doxography of ‘origins’, McCann (2002), 3–35.
- 2 He is the swineherd of March in Triad 26W. See Bromwich (1978), 46f. Eisner draws attention (47 n. 11) to a historical Dryst son of Talorc known as King of the Picts, dying c.780.
- 3 Eisner (1969), 66–70; 91–94, 103–106.
- 4 Padel (1981) emphasises this aspect, and he concludes that it was Cornish versions of whatever character through which the continental versions were derived: ‘The Tristan stories, then, are Cornwall’s most significant, and best-known, gift to the literary world’ (52).
- 5 For example, Newstead in *ALMA* (1959), 130, noting *inter alia* the episode of the planned murder of Isolde’s maid Brangain; the equivocal oath sworn by Isolde; and the episode of the tryst under the tree.
- 6 Eisner (1969), 66–70; 91–94, 103–106.
- 7 Eisner (1969), 159–161.
- 8 First pointed out by Graf (1869).
- 9 Translation of the Georgian version as the *Visramiani* by O. Wardrop, 1914.
- 10 Gurgani, tr. Morrison (1972). As most scholars have used the translation from Georgian, McCann (2002), 7–12 offers a helpfully detailed correspondence with the Persian version, which differs in a number of minor details from the Georgian (e.g. the Tristan figure makes love to the nurse; and a female sorceress is introduced).
- 11 *Visramiani* 2. Wardrop (1912), 4–7; in this case the queen has been gained by Moabad from yet a third partner Viro (c. 9, Wardrop (1912), 32–40).
- 12 *Visramiani* c. 15, Wardrop (1912), 58–62.
- 13 McCann does his best to challenge the overall resemblance, and the long summary mentioned above helps by highlighting the differences in the early history of Vis’ relations with Moabad. But the basic core cannot be easily shaken, and his main concern really seems to be to challenge claims of oriental *priority* and raise the usual chimaera of precise route of transmission. But the second-century evidence to all intents and purposes renders this analysis of the problem out of date.
- 14 *Shah-Nama* tr. R. Levy, rev. A. Banani (1967), 17–25. There is a further doublet, with different details again, in Firdausi’s story of the Sassanid king Ardashir and his wife, Levy (1967) 254–269.
- 15 M. Dresden in Kramer (1961), 349f. Thraetaona is identified in *Yasht* 9 as the killer of the dragon Dahaka, the Zahak of the *Shah-Nama*. In the Avestan text it is three-headed; the *Shah-Nama* present Zahak as a man with two snakes growing out of his shoulders.
- 16 Cf. Chapter 4 at note 12.

- 17 Teubner text by E. Habrich (1960); commentary and revised text in Winkler-Stephens (1995), 179–245.
- 18 And accepted by Merkelbach (1962), 179f.
- 19 Iamblichus 74ab; Gottfried, Hatto (1967), 261–273; Bérout presents the essence of the episode, but without the cave.
- 20 In both texts the king is a widower aspiring to marry the girl, but prevented by her immediately preceding espousal and (at least implied) marriage promise to Diarmaid, so that the king is the would-be adulterer (tr. O'Grady (1857), 47–61). The couple run off to the 'wood of the two tents', and Diarmaid fortifies the entrances to an enclosure. Later they flee to a cave after advice from the prophet Angus never to hide in a cave with only one entrance, implying that this one must have two, like that in Iamblichus (tr. O'Grady (1857), 77; cf. Iamblichus 74a and fr. 11). Poison is provided at this point not by poisoned bees, but by three venomous dogs, and slightly later by a witch-nurse who fires poison darts through the middle of a magic millstone – a completely different method, but one equally unrealistic and extravagant (tr. O'Grady (1857), 83, 167ff.; Iamblichus 74a). (Much of the later action of Diarmaid is not found in Iamblichus or elsewhere: whole sections devoted to the feats of the hero as an acrobatic trickster, suitable to heroic saga, are missing from the 'romantic' tradition both East and West).
- 21 Iamblichus 74a; Curtis (1994), 10.
- 22 Iamblichus 77b.
- 23 In the Hom *Yasht*, Yasna 9.7 Thraetaona's father Athwya is the second to prepare *haoma* for the corporeal world.
- 24 The North African Garamantes were associated in Antiquity with horrible snake-women, as described in Lucian's *Dipsades*.
- 25 Curtis (1994), 169; Iamblichus 74a.
- 26 Curtis (1994), 166.
- 27 Text of *Tristan als Mönch* in Bushey (1974)
- 28 Iamblichus 74b; *Prose Tristan*, Curtis (1994), 166f.
- 29 Bérout, Fedrick (1971), 94.
- 30 Iamblichus fr. 9 cf. 74a, p. 202 Winkler-Stephens; *Visramiani* p. 206 Wardrop.
- 31 Levy (1967), 20.
- 32 Bérout 78f.; 99–103.
- 33 Iamblichus 74b; *Visramiani* 134f.; 208.
- 34 Iamblichus 75a.
- 35 Gottfried 246ff. Hatto; Bérout 121–143.
- 36 *Visramiani* 131f.: in effect this combines the idea of the oath and the fire as punishment for the heroine; but the lovers flee rather than face the oath, on the advice of the nurse.
- 37 Iamblichus 75a.
- 38 *Prose Tristan*, Curtis (1994), 137, 196.
- 39 Iamblichus 76a.
- 40 Thomas 339ff. Hatto.
- 41 Gottfried 205–208 Hatto; Iamblichus 77b.
- 42 Gottfried 322ff. Hatto; Iamblichus 77b. Winkler-Stephens translate ambiguously, to allow the possibility that this is no more than florid metaphor ('having drunk deep from the wellspring of passion'). Aside from the comparison with Tristan and the water-talisman in the *Visramiani*, there is much more point in

- having the eunuch *forced* by factors beyond his control to be in love with Mesopotamia.
- 43 Gottfried 214–218, 311–314 Hatto; Iamblichus 76b.
- 44 E.g. Icelandic Tristan p. 27f. Hill (1977).
- 45 Iamblichus 78a.
- 46 Iamblichus 78a; *Visramiani* cc.57, 59 (Wardrop 383ff., 389–396), but the king is actually killed by a boar, 387.
- 47 *Prose Tristan*, Curtis (1994), 190f.
- 48 Levy (1967), 25.
- 49 As presented in a scholion in the Marcianus Venetus A of Photius. For the text, Habrich (1960), 2; tr. Winkler-Stephens (1995), 181.
- 50 Bérout, Fedrick (1971), 120–143.
- 51 *Prose Tristan*, Curtis (1994), 194–197.
- 52 Iamblichus 75a. For his reputation, Diodorus 1.65..
- 53 For the stylistic implication, Anderson (1993), 156–170.
- 54 Useful summary in *ALMA* 144 (F. Whitehead).
- 55 Iamblichus 76a.
- 56 Iamblichus 76b, 77a.
- 57 For useful discussion of Geoffrey of Monmouth's practice see Tatlock (1950/1), 116–120.
- 58 For example, even Loomis in his most Hellenophile phase has recourse to Frazer, Rhys or Gilbert Murray as readily as to actual ancient sources; this is as true of Littleton-Malcor as of the traditional interpreters: Theseus' episode with the sword is cited from Rose rather than direct from Plutarch.
- 59 For exemplary analysis of a single author's practice, Tatlock (1950/1), 116–170 on the names in Geoffrey's *HRB*; but even here there is a tendency to presume forgery at every opportunity.
- 60 Eisner (1969), 153f., 159ff.
- 61 E.g. Parthenius 4 (*FGrH* 45.F2); cf. Conon, *FGrH* 26.F 1.23.
- 62 The allusions are variously pieced together from Hyginus, *Fabula* 91 (exposure and acceptance); Ovid, *Heroides* 16 (the drinking); Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* (the treasure); Pausanias 3.22.1f. (the *Migonitis*, or temple of sex; 3.20.9 (the horse-piece oath); Dares 28 (the killing of Palamedes); Euripides' *Helen* (the double); Apollodorus 3.12.6 (Oenone).
- 63 Again, I have used a broad range of Tristan tradition: the motif of stealing treasure seems to belong with the Eastern versions.
- 64 Gantz (1993), 663f.
- 65 The alternative, non-Homeric tradition of Palamedes begins with the *Cypria*; for its culmination in the Palamedes-Romance, *ALMA* 348–351.
- 66 *Odyssey* 4.219–232.
- 67 Ed. A. Micha (1978–1983); tr. D.D.R. Owen (1987).
- 68 Despite Fénice's explicit rejections of comparison with Isolde, 3105–3114; 5199–5203.
- 69 E.g. *Cligès* 3023–3174, which might as well have come straight out of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*.
- 70 *Cligès* lines 18–24, tr. Owen (1987).
- 71 *Cligès* 5743–5966; *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyrii* 26f.
- 72 Gantz (1993), 663f.

- 73 Euripides, *Helen* 605–616.
 74 Euripides, *Helen* 1050–1618.

9 SIX ARTHURS IN SEARCH OF A CHARACTER

- 1 Loomis (1926), 5–11.
- 2 See above Chapter 4 after note 56.
- 3 Loomis (1926), 286ff.: much of this was later retracted, wrongly, as it turns out.
- 4 *Suda-Lexicon* s.v. Iamblichos. The real language may just be Akkadian, still possible to read and write in the second century AD, but as an archaic language.
- 5 Barber and Pykitt make the assertion (1997, 103, n.8) that 'the Zodiacal Wheel is the archetype of the Round Table', but offer no reference, and no very clear place in overall discussion.
- 6 *Queste*, Matarasso (1971), 99; Bérout 3384.
- 7 For brilliant denunciation, D. Page (1956), 2ff.
- 8 Thus offering a name Cuneglasus (Gildas' immediate addressee) as a virtually unknown Dark Age Arthur. The suggestion was advanced by the Andersons in the 1920s, and needs to be taken a good deal more seriously than it is by e.g. Barber (1972), 50.
- 9 For the chronology of Celtic migration, Rankin (1987), 38, 166, 213f.
- 10 Latham s.v. Arcturus.
- 11 For Llydd and Lydus see Appendix 1.
- 12 For the story of Kessi the Hunter, Hoffner (1990), 67f.
- 13 Cf. Lesky (1963), 857.
- 14 *ALMA* (1959), 62.
- 15 In *ALMA* (1959), 1, endorsed by Alcock (1987), 407.
- 16 Dumville (1977a), 188.
- 17 Malcor (1999, 2000).
- 18 Iamblichus 78a; Lucian, *Toxaris passim*.
- 19 For views on Herodotus, Pritchett (1993), against Fehling (1971 rev. 1989).
- 20 Hanfmann (1983), 26–99 *passim*.
- 21 For the subsequent testimonia throughout Antiquity, K.F.Smith (1920).
- 22 See Appendix 1.
- 23 See Appendix 2.
- 24 Castleden (2000), 220.
- 25 See Appendix 4.
- 26 See Loomis in *ALMA* (1959), 64–71 for the main passages.
- 27 Passages collected by Briggs (1970), B1.163f.; B2.243f.
- 28 Arthur in Sicily: *ALMA* (1959), 67f. (Avalon in Sicily); Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia* 3 (Chambers, 1927, 276f.). I am grateful to Jack Zipes for drawing to my attention three examples of type 301 he has newly collected in Sicily itself.
- 29 On this phenomenon and its relationship to the 'discovery of giant bones' motif in ancient literature, see now Mayor (2000), 104–156.
- 30 *CAH* 3 vol. 3.2, 570.
- 31 *FGrH* 679.F12.
- 32 Plutarch, *Theseus* 35.5.
- 33 I.e. in the anecdote about Kerses and Spermus, Nicolaus *FGrH* 90.F44; cf. the shaving of Arthur's beard demanded by the giant Retho, Geoffrey *HRB* 10.3.

- 34 For brief theory of migratory legend, see Krappe (1930), 101–137.
- 35 Cf. now Wells (2001), *passim*.
- 36 Lucian, *Heracles* 1–6.
- 37 See Anderson (1993), 216–220.
- 38 For the history and iconography of the legend, see now Riches (2000).
- 39 *FGrH* 90F44.
- 40 See Appendix 4.
- 41 See among much Hägg (1983), 81–101.
- 42 For curious formulation, Perry (1967), 164: ‘Only an obscure Greek romancer addressing himself primarily to juvenile readers would write in *that* fashion about the national heroes of any country.’
- 43 It goes back to Huet in the mid-seventeenth century.
- 44 So Photius *Codex* 94.78b, as opposed to *Suda-Lexicon* s.v. Iamblichos.
- 45 For the nature of his work, *Shah-Nama*, Levy (1967), xvi–xxvi.
- 46 Herodotus 8.137f.; Nicolaus *FGrH* 90.Ff. 44–47.
- 47 Herodotus 8.138.
- 48 Nicolaus, *FGrH* 90.F47.
- 49 Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 3.8; Plutarch, *Greek Questions* 45.
- 50 *POxy* 2382 (1956).
- 51 *Resp.* 359D.
- 52 Ps.-Callisthenes 1.1–7; *Shah-Nama*, Levy (1967), 232–250.
- 53 See Appendix 2.

APPENDIX 1: FROM KAMBLES TO CAMALIS

- 1 Herodotus 1.7.
- 2 For speculation as to the location of Camelot, see e.g. Alcock (1987), 161ff.; Castleden (2000), 148–177. Many point to the essential mobility of Dark Age war-leaders, or otherwise strive to insist on Camelot as romantic embellishment: Alcock (1987); Castleden (2000), 174–177.
- 3 *AND* s.v. Camalis.
- 4 Micha (1978–1983), 2.60.16–24.
- 5 Xanthus, *FGrH* 765F18.
- 6 Nicolaus, *FGrH* 90F22.
- 7 Sources in Gantz (1993), 437, 439ff.
- 8 Textbooks tend to confine the title Kandaules to Hermes, on the strength of Hipponax fr. 3a West; the latter’s apparatus however tacitly corrects the balance.
- 9 Micha 2.60.16.
- 10 *FGrH* 765F23 Jacoby.
- 11 Herodotus 1.7 Lydus son of Atys; 1.94 (between whose testimony there need be no contradiction, cf. Lamer in *RE* 13.2 s.v. Lydos).
- 12 *Llydd and Llevelys*, 132f. Gantz (1993).

APPENDIX 2: MORE 'BEAR'S SON' HEROES: THESEUS,
ACHILLES, BATRAZ, ALEXANDER

- 1 Plutarch, *Theseus* 3.4f.
- 2 For previous mythological treatment of Theseus, Gantz (1993), 249–298 *passim*; for the political dimension, Walker (1995), *passim*.
- 3 Plutarch, *Theseus* 3.3f.
- 4 Malory 1.2f.
- 5 Pausanias 8.37.11; *FGrH* 457.F9.
- 6 Gantz (1993), 239; 247.
- 7 Apollodorus 3.15.7; Hyginus *Fabula* 37; further refs. in Gantz (1993), 249. Plutarch, *Theseus* 6.1 attributes Pittheus with the claim that Poseidon was the father.
- 8 Plutarch, *Theseus* 16.1.
- 9 Ed. C. Brunel (1943); tr. R.G. Arthur (New York, 1992).
- 10 Plutarch, *Theseus* 31.4.
- 11 Plutarch, *Theseus* 32.2–34.1 (where the capture of Helen at Aphidnae seems implied).
- 12 For the meaning of Guinevere, Loomis (1926), 7 (comparing Breton Winlowen/Wenlowen, 'white and joyous').
- 13 Plutarch, *Theseus* 35.4.
- 14 Aarne-Thompson Type 301 V(c)(d).
- 15 *Theseus* 36.1f.
- 16 Littleton-Malcor (2000), 183.
- 17 Tale 12, Dumézil (1930), 54.
- 18 *True Histories* 2.11, 14 (glass bath-houses and trees).
- 19 For the Troad, in particular Philostratus' *Heroicus*; for the Black Sea, Hedreen (1991), 313–330.
- 20 Philostratus, *Heroicus* 211f. (p. 71 Lannoy).
- 21 Achilles and Medea: Ibycus, schol. Apollonius Rhodius 4.815; Apollodorus, *Epitome* 5.5. Littleton-Malcor 160–163.
- 22 For its evolution from the concerns of the former to those of the latter, R. Stoneman in Schmeling (1996), 601–612.
- 23 E.g. Hägg (1983) 125–140; Stoneman in Morgan and Stoneman (1994), 117–129.
- 24 Merkelbach (2nd edn 1977).
- 25 Ps.-Callisthenes A 1–7.
- 26 Ps.-Callisthenes A 1.14.
- 27 Ps.-Callisthenes A 3.19.22.
- 28 Ps.-Callisthenes B 2.38.
- 29 Ps.-Callisthenes B 2.41.
- 30 *Folklore* 2 (1891) (repr. Matthews 1996), 308–331.
- 31 Gunderson (1980), 3.28.6.
- 32 For this feature in the Graal romances, e.g. Wolfram, Loomis (1963), 200.
- 33 E.g. First Sequel, Loomis (1963), 72.
- 34 It is tempting to compare the exotic colouring of Philostratus' third-century presentation of the sights of Babylon, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.25.
- 35 Ps.-Callisthenes A 1.29.
- 36 E.g. *Vita Paterni* (S. Padarn), Cotton Vespasian A.xiv.

NOTES

- 37 For the Glastonbury scandal, Alcock (1987), 73–80.
38 E.g. Anderson (1996); cf. Bowie (1994), Egger (1994).

APPENDIX 4: TOXARIS' THIRD TALE

- 1 Hence Vinaver (1971) moves straight from a consideration of Roland at Roncevaux to the Romances of Chrétien; the latter is assumed to have no predecessors, and Chrétien himself is seen as the founder of the genre.
2 *Toxaris* 56. Mnesippus significantly adds *kai muthois homoia* ('and like [tall] tales').

APPENDIX 6: MYTHOLOGY IN THE 'NENNIAN' BATTLE-LIST

- 1 Green (2001), 12.
2 Coe and Young (1995), 130f.
3 *LIMC* Supplement s.v.
4 Pausanias 8.45.7; 8.5.4.
5 Hesiod fr. 163 M.-W.
6 Cf. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.237f.
7 Fr. 8 Fowler.
8 See Appendix 2 above.

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